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SIR GEORGE POMEROY-COLLEY

THE LIFE OF

SIR GEORGE POMEROY-COLLEY

K.C.S.I. C.B. C.M.G.

1835-1881

INCLUDING SERVICES IN KAFFRARIA—IN CHINA
IN ASHANTI—IN INDIA AND IN NATAL

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR WILLIAM F. BUTLER, K.C.B.

AUTHOR OF 'THE GREAT LONE LAND' ETC.

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WITH PORTRAIT, MAPS, AND ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1899

'YET WITH A NOBLE NATURE AND GREAT GIFTS
WAS HE ENDOWED—COURAGE, DISCRETION, WIT,
AN EQUAL TEMPER AND AN AMPLE SOUL,
ROCK-BOUND AND FORTIFIED AGAINST ASSAULTS
OF TRANSITORY PASSION, BUT BELOW
BUILT ON A SURGING SUBTERRANEAN FIRE
THAT STIRRED AND LIFTED HIM TO HIGH ATTEMPTS.
SO PROMPT AND CAPABLE AND YET SO CALM,
HE NOTHING LACKED . . . . .
. . . . . IN SOLDIERSHIP EXCEPT GOOD FORTUNE.'

('*Philip Van Artevelde*')

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THE LIFE

OF

SIR GEORGE POMEROY-COLLEY

CHAPTER I

THE COLLEYS

The Plover-taker—Parentage—Early days—Enters army

THE death of the last Plantagenet on the field of Bosworth may be said to have marked the opening of a fresh chapter in the evolution of social life in England. The old order of the sword as the regulator of property and winner of possession gave place to the new dispensation of legal surety, and henceforth deed, covenant, and indenture, with all their accompanying sleights of word, and cunningly contrived forms of attack and defence, became the basis of human society.

In the earlier order, possession and property rested frankly upon force, upon decrees maintained by the knight, the man-at-arms, and the archer; in the newer system the ready writer, the fluent speaker, the man apt in council and versed in intrigue, became the instruments by which property could be acquired or retained; and though the object under each order

remained the same, a totally new set of human agencies were demanded to keep or change the fact of possession.

Thus, in the reign of the first Tudor, we become conscious in Ireland of a novel factor introduced into the life and surroundings of the feudal lords. It is the 'counsel'—the man who advised, who wrote, who was sent on confidential missions to the court and council in England whenever his master had a suit to press, a rival to discredit, a manor, 'pardon,' or gift to obtain. Among the names of these legal advisers and trusty messengers which figure in the records of this transition time, there was one Robert Cowley, Coule, Cooley, or Colley, as it is variously written, of Kilkenny, who appears to have been born in the latter half of the fifteenth century. At what time the first of the name appeared in Ireland is now impossible to determine, but certain is it that there was a Colley portreeve or sheriff in Kilkenny as early as 1407, and that others of the name held offices connected with the prisage of wine in Ireland in that century.

That Robert Cowley was a man of parts, endowed with excellent abilities as adviser and agent, is made clear in the records of the time, and there is a letter of his extant, addressed to Thomas Cromwell upon the necessity of still retaining intact amid all the changing land tenures of the time 'the men of warre that should defende the countrey.' That he was fully versed in the intrigues of his age is also evident. Indeed, his conduct on one occasion seems to have given rise to an expression which held the field for generations as the definition of a successful politician. It was the term 'plover-taker.' The story is worth

repeating as it is told in the Book of Howth, that quaint old record, still preserved in the Lambeth Library.

Cowley had been councillor to the Earl of Kildare, prior to holding the same position under the Earl of Ormonde. The two earls were deadly enemies, and the councillor appears to have carried into the hostile camp of the Ormondes a large store of hatred towards his former master. The chronicler writes:

> This Cowly wroght as muche agaynste the Eyerle of Kildare as he could or was abulle. This Coule beinge in Englande afor the Cosall coplayninge apon the Eyrle, the teerres fell frome his eyes; the Eyrle asked him why he so did. He sayd it was for pitty and contemplacio that he had apon his father's sone; but my duty to my princ, infosith me thus to do to you. Sayd the Eyrle he is like the pluer taker in setting his snares and waiting for his desired purpos, his eyes being agaynste the wind, and the water droppinge out. So many pluers as he takithe, he neepythe ther braynes out with his thombe, notwithstanding his watrye teres of contemplacio; even so does Mr. Coule with me, his teres cometh downe as he laythe matters or articles to my charge.

This discourse of the earl before the English Privy Council was termed at the time 'a mery tale of ye Eyrle,' but it had a sorrowful ending for the Geraldine. A few years later, Earl Gerald died miserably in the Tower; his son, Lord Thomas, and his five brothers, though they had surrendered to Lord Deputy Grey under positive guarantees of safety, were executed at Tyburn. Whether the 'matters or articles' laid to his charge by Master Robert Cowley had been the cause of this wholesale family ruin cannot now be traced, but there is some significance in the fact that many of the manors and townships

of Carbery and Dangan, all old Geraldine possessions, are to-day in the hands of the descendants of the 'pluer-taker.'

In 1538 we find Robert Cowley Master of the Rolls, and two years later commissioner for selling the lands of the abbeys and monasteries in Ireland. Despite a serious reverse of fortune, he appears to have transmitted to his son Walter, who became Solicitor-General, a goodly share of the land and possessions of Carbery. Dying in 1551, this Walter Cowley left two sons, Henry and Walter. Henry, the elder, became a captain in the Irish wars of Queen Elizabeth, was knighted by Sidney, and left many children; one of these was the ancestor of a later Sir Henry Colley, father of Richard Colley, first Baron Mornington, who, in 1728, assumed the name of Wellesley, and whose grandson was the Duke of Wellington.

Sir Henry Colley had also two daughters, who shared between them the Castle Carbery estate; but the whole ultimately fell to the descendants of the younger daughter, Mary, who married Arthur Pomeroy, afterwards first Viscount Harberton. Three of her sons succeeded to the title, and between her two grandsons the Colley property was still divided—the elder brother inheriting his grand-aunt's moiety, while Mary's share went to the younger son, George, on condition of his taking the name of Colley.

This George Pomeroy, afterwards Colley, entered the royal navy, but left it in a few years, when his prospects of succeeding to the property became assured. He married, in 1825, Frances Trench, daughter of the Dean of Kildare, and niece of the first Lord Ashtown. By this marriage he had five children.

The third son, George Pomeroy-Colley, born in Dublin, November 1, 1835, is the subject of this memoir.

Mr. George Colley, after his marriage in 1825, resided at Rathangan, in the County Kildare, some thirty miles west of Dublin. The house stood at one end of the village, not far from the Bog of Allen, which spread away in an immense sweep of brown peat land until it was lost in a horizon as flat as that of the ocean. The surrounding region had originally formed part of the Geraldine property, and the Castle of Rathangan had been one of the chief fortresses which held the borders of the Pale against the incursions of the tribes and sects that ruled from the Barrow to the western ocean; but in the seventeenth century a hamlet had grown up near the ruined castle, and when the canal—'Grand,' of course—came to unite the waters of the Barrow with the sea at Dublin, the hamlet grew into a village, a clean tidy little post town where a Quaker settlement took root and flourished.

This quiet village, with its Quaker colony, remained for many years the home of the George Colleys. Seven miles west across the moorland was the estate, and twice a week, come rain or storm or sun, Mr. George Colley drove over the long stretch of country to visit it, coming back in the winter's twilight to the old-fashioned home, 'somewhat back from the village street,' at the outskirts of Rathangan.

Before he was two years old, little George Pomeroy was taken abroad on what, even so late as 1837, was called the 'grand tour.' In the first carriage the father and mother with two children; servants and luggage in a second; a year in Paris, two in

Germany, one in Switzerland, and then again in Paris; the children getting to speak French and German, seeing mountains, lakes, and art galleries. It would be difficult to find a wider groundwork for education.

After this six years' foreign wandering, George came back to go to school at Cheam, in Surrey, where the master, a well-known teacher of his day, Dr. Mayo, finds the boy 'swift to take offence, prompt and vigorous in resenting it,' to the astonishment of the parents who had hitherto regarded him as being exceptionally gentle and quiet.

During the six years at Cheam, George acquitted himself well. He was very fond of reading, studied hard, and always brought prizes home when the holidays came. The family were again back at Rathangan, and all the wonders of the Alps and the glories of the Rhine paled before the delights of the Irish home—the old garden with the river below the wall, the moorland beyond. 'Oh, the delight of a home,' wrote one of them in after years when recalling that earlier period, 'instead of some "campagne" where we stayed a year or two, and where no dogs, cats, or gardens could be permanent!'

Of the old days of the Geraldines, not one story lingered in the village mind. Yet Rathangan had witnessed many wild scenes of war and foray, when 'Kildare' was in his glory, and his Castle of Rathangan, by the Little Barrow, looked over the land which still owned the dominion of the O'Moores and the O'Conors of Leix, Offaly, and Glynmalire.

Beyond the river, ten minutes' walk from the house in which Mr. Colley lived, was the residence of his brother, Lord Harberton, 'Spencer Farm,' on

the stairs of which the great-grandfather, Mr. Spencer, had been shot by the rebels in 1798. So there was no lack of later tradition among the young people.

At Cheam School George Colley remained till he was thirteen. Another head-master had succeeded Dr. Mayo—a change which developed among some at least of the scholars an ardent desire for the sea, but whether as a suitable profession for life, or only as an escape from the rule of the new master, is not clear. The army was, however, deemed by the boy's parents to be a better profession for him, and at the age of thirteen and a half he entered Sandhurst as a cadet.

Some letters of that time still extant already indicate the care and exactness which in after life were so characteristic of the man, and a passage in one of them is typical of the future soldier. He is describing a severe accident he had just met with :

I think that we ought to be all glad now, for I am glad that my arm is getting well, and so are you I am sure. We are like the ship's captain, who boasted that he left his crew the happiest men in the service, for he had just flogged twenty of them and they were glad it was over, and the remainder were equally happy at not being flogged; so they were all happy. When he (the doctor) was setting my arm, I did not even give myself leave to groan; I set myself back in the chair, drew a long breath, shut my teeth fast, and waited till it was over; and then I asked him a few questions about it, and walked away quite comfortably, for it no longer hurt me.[1]

At the Royal Military College he spent three years, leaving it in May 1852 with a brilliant record :

[1] April 8, 1851, to his elder sister.

first in general merit and good conduct, and first on the list for commissions. On the 28th of the same month he was gazetted ensign without purchase in the 2nd 'Queen's' Regiment, then quartered in South Africa, and having its depôt at Kinsale, Ireland.

CHAPTER II

THE 'QUEEN'S'

Irish stations—Early friends—Embarks for South Africa—A prayer at sea

PERHAPS no event leaves a more lasting impression on the memory than that which a young officer experiences when he joins the army. The entrance to all professions is like passing through the door of life, but the army door strikes the imagination more than any other. The barrack-gate localises the feeling into a distinct tangible reality; the sentinel without, the armed guard within, the austere buildings, the bugle calls ringing through the squares, the evidences of order and discipline—these things impress the mind with the sense of some great step forward into that vague and vast world which the boy-imagination has been unconsciously endeavouring to pierce and realise.

The 2nd 'Queen's,' the corps to which young Colley had been gazetted, quartered at the time in South Africa, was from every point of view a regiment calculated to strike the mind of a newcomer with reverential enthusiasm. It had of course a history, and it was a very proud history. It had been originally named after the Princess of Portugal, the wife of Charles II., a queen who, if she gave no heir to her husband, brought to England, in her dower, the island of Bombay, that foothold in the

east from which so much dominion has sprung. The 'Queen's' was the first regiment that ever crossed the seas, and its history (since the time it went to fight the Moors at Tangier) has been linked with the history of the Greater Britain beyond our shores.

Joining the depôt of his regiment at Kinsale, the life of the young subaltern ran the usual course of drill and duty. Many letters written by him at the time are still in existence, and, as we read them, the hopes and anxieties of youth, its perturbation over some trifling shortcoming in the present, its gay acceptance of indefinite difficulties in the future, are made very evident. But other things are to be traced in these early letters—a habit of close and accurate reasoning, a deep determination to succeed, a quiet consciousness that there is within him a reserve of physical and moral strength, and that he is quite a match for scores of the more practised and fluent youths with whom he is thrown in contact. At the end of this year (1852) he writes to his sister an amusing confession of boyish shyness, and thus describes his first ball at country quarters:

As for your question of whether I could dance yet, do you imagine there is a dancing academy in Kinsale? At first I did not intend to go to the ball; but, as there were only very few of us and we were all wanted, if only to make a good show of red coats, I went, but not till after twelve. Before I consented, however, to go down at all, I made a bargain that I should not be introduced to anybody unless at my special request. Accordingly, as I did not know a single lady in the room, I got on pretty well, for I amused myself by looking on and making remarks, and chatting sometimes with some of ours, when they were not engaged dancing, and sometimes with some of the 'natives' whom I knew. I got on very well this way till after four, and might

have remained the whole time had not our major set his heart apparently on making me dance with his wife; and as I did not wish to offend him, while at the same time I had not the smallest idea of trying my dancing powers, though it was only a quadrille, I took the first opportunity when he happened to look away, and, slipping out, bolted!

It is not improbable that at the moment he would have bartered his knowledge of languages and his rare power in drawing for the trick of whirling a partner round a ballroom, or entertaining her with the very smallest of small talk.

'It should perhaps be explained,' says the writer of some notes on Colley's life from which I shall quote occasionally, 'that when Mr. George Colley left the navy he was, and remained during his whole life, under a strong religious impression, and it was somewhat against the grain that he consented to his third boy entering so worldly a profession as the army. Mr. Colley was a man of resolute character, not untinged with austerity. The pervading influence at home was the intense spirituality distinctive of Evangelicism at its best, tempered in this case by the mental vigour of the father and the more artistic and imaginative gifts of his wife. The household life is spoken of by those who remember it as having been one of unusual dignity as well as happiness—well ordered, full of interest, full, too, of courtesy and charm. But it was not a home in which the dancing-master was recognised.

'George Colley at this time has been described to me by one who remembers him well in his seventeenth year. He was slight and well proportioned, but with a look of great physical strength. The features

possessed the strongly moulded type noticeable in several branches of the Colley race; the brown hair fell upon a forehead already suggesting intellectual power. His chief interests at this time were the artistic and literary pursuits which always held their own, notwithstanding an arduous professional life, until in the stress of the last few years they were necessarily laid aside. On such topics he was, I am told, often full of talk—at other times silent and dreamy. Though finished in manner even as a lad, he himself seems in his boyish years to have suffered from a quite disproportionate sense of shyness. I can well imagine a boy conscious of considerable power feeling solitary and at a disadvantage amongst others, not from too little manner in the common sense, but from too much ability—gifts beyond what his social practice as yet enables him to express.'[1]

A letter on New Year's Day, 1853, shows the boy to have a steady head and stout constitution. 'Many happy returns to the New Year,' he writes to his sister:

> The mess bugle last night saved you from a long lecture about drawing and painting, and called me away to a merry party, who had assembled to see the New Year in. A pleasant party we had. We did not go to bed till four o'clock, but I am up as usual, and as happy as Punch which I always am, as this letter ought to testify, seeing that I am writing it at eight o'clock previous to getting my breakfast, while most of my worthy comrades are in bed, from which they are not likely to arise before 11 o'clock.

At this period the depôt of a regiment was a little regiment in itself; one major, four captains,

[1] 'Biographical Notes,' E. P. C.

and some eight subalterns, mostly very young, formed what was called the establishment of officers. It was the pre-Crimean time; work was light, there was plenty of leisure for reading if one cared to improve the mind, for shooting or fishing if muscle or nerve were to be developed, and also for loafing and billiards and idling if the walk of life was to be taken backwards.

That Ensign Colley read, wrote, walked, sketched, and worked hard to improve mind and body, is made clear in his many letters from Kinsale, Shannon Bridge, Templemore, and other Irish stations during the couple of years of his depôt life. From Templemore he writes to his mother:

I did not pay my intended visit to Kenmare after all, not for want of money, but because I could not get leave, so I don't consider myself entitled to keep your kind present when it arrives. However, to make up for not seeing Killarney, I have been visiting some beautiful ruins of old abbeys near this, and have been doing a good deal in the way of sketching. There is a most beautiful ruin at Cashel which I have paid several visits to; it contains one chapel considerably older than the rest which I am sure would delight you. It is in the old Norman or Saxon style, I don't know which (but indeed wiser heads than mine differ about it), but I will show you a tolerably accurate sketch which I made of it, and you will be able to judge for yourself. Then there is another ruin, Holy Cross, about fourteen miles from this, of which I have also made some sketches. It is full of fine windows, the stone cut in the most beautiful patterns, and no two alike. I have tried to sketch some of them.

Between sketching and taking tremendous walks (generally between twenty and thirty miles long) I amuse myself very well here.[2]

[2] September 24, 1853.

He is just eighteen years old, and of course he is writing poetry. To his mother he says:

I enclose you a small specimen of my poetical productions. I send it because it is simple (for it is not much in the style of my usual productions), but I request you will criticise it as severely as you please, and not spare it, for I know your criticism will not be ridicule, as Henry's and a great many persons' would be, but you will show me the real faults.[3]

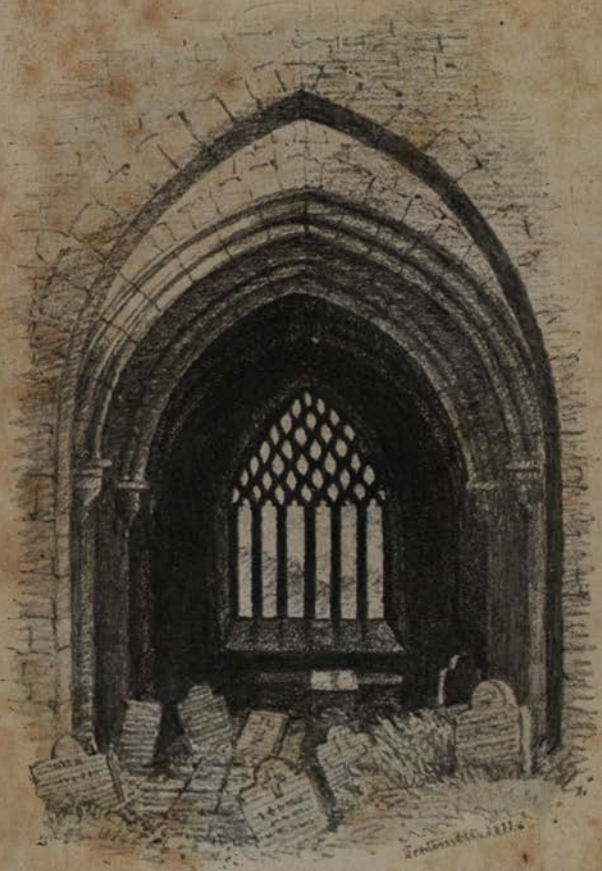
After a short tour of duty in Carlow, Ensign Colley was ordered on detachment to Shannon Bridge, and the early spring of 1854 finds him, as before, busy at his books.

Since I came here I have been reading from three to four hours regularly every day. I have read Ruskin's 'Modern Painters,' his 'Seven Lamps,' the first and second volume of Carlyle, one volume of 'Cosmos,' and a good deal of Locke, which I like very much. . . . Ruskin's book has given me twice the pleasure in Nature that I had before; it has shown me beauties in the sky, in the water, in ugly landscapes as well as in pretty ones, which I had never dreamt of before, and when I take a stroll now I feel something like the old story of eyes and no eyes. This place is completely surrounded by bog for about five miles, and is infinitely the flattest place I ever saw. The Bog of Allen is a mountainous district compared to it, and yet I have got to like it very much; in spite of all its flatness it looks very pretty when the sun is shining, for the Shannon looks so blue, and the strip of bright green grass which borders it on each side forms such a contrast, and even the bog beyond has a rich warm reddish hue which makes it a most pleasant thing to look at; and then I have got a nice yacht in which I sail up and down the river.[4]

There was another pleasure which the young

[3] November 1853.

[4] March 1854, to his elder sister.



HOLY CROSS

To face p. 14

officer was enjoying at this time in a measure the fulness of which he was only able to realise when it was lost to him—real friendship. At Sandhurst he had formed a very close intimacy with a boy of his own age named Lea Birch; they were chums, class-mates, friends; they wrote long letters to each other, had most tastes in common, and were both extremely fond of scenery and sketching. The depôt of the 55th, the regiment to which Birch belonged, was stationed in Ireland in 1854; and the two friends came together again on the Shannon in the early half of that year. How exactly their minds were attuned to each other the following little picture of the ruins of Clonmacnoise will show. Birch is writing in February from Shannon Bridge to his friend, then on leave in Dublin:

There are miles of bog on every side of us and no trees. Five miles up the river is Clonmacnoise, with its seven churches, two round towers, castle, &c., the most curious and interesting mass of ruin I ever saw. Cure and I walked out to it one day, and saw it certainly in its most imposing aspect. There was blowing a hurricane, a snow-storm had just passed. It was one of those wild cloudy and sunshiny days which of all others suits its exposed situation, most certainly I think one of the grandest scenes imaginable.

And then comes a sentence to which subsequent history has given interest:

'War with Russia to the knife,' the 'Times' says, 'is the cry of the whole country.' Shut up in Shannon Bridge, we are obliged to take everything the 'Times' and 'Illustrated London News' says for Gospel. But whether war is so very much the cry of the nation you are much better able to say than I. It is evident they will have to increase the force now going, to double its numbers.

Clearly this boy officer had a truer notion of the coming trouble than had many older heads nearer to the centre of government.

At the end of March 1854, the two friends were together in Athlone, and on the 7th of the following month Birch started for the war. On the evening of that day Colley writes to his sister:

> When your letter came, I was rather low, for I saw Birch off for the Eastern war this morning, and you know how different it is working in good or bad spirits; and just as I had finished everything, and was going to my room without energy enough to do anything, even read, your letter came in and did me so much good. I had no idea I was so fond of Birch until he went, but now I miss him so. We were so pleasant together here; we had a house between us rather separate from the other quarters, and we were incessantly together; or if we were reading in our own rooms, every time either came across anything that he liked particularly he immediately ran to show it to the other, and we always passed our evenings so pleasantly together. Oh, I feel *so* lonely! X, much as I liked him, was not a companion to me; Birch was, having almost exactly the same tastes, with just enough difference to prevent monotony.
>
> But enough of this—I was very fond of Birch and we have parted—perhaps for ever. But does not that happen every day?

It was for ever. A few months later Lea Birch was destined to add his few spadefuls of dust to the daily growing mounds that covered the slopes of the wintry ridges before Sevastopol. There is no detailed record of his death among the papers from which this life is written, but allusions to him are frequent. A letter from Colonel Colley, written on his voyage to the Gold Coast in 1873, shows that the recollection of the friend who had perished in

the Crimea eighteen years before was still strong in the memory of the survivor.

While Lea Birch in the Crimea was writing his last letter to his old schoolmate, the latter was already *en route* for the Cape of Good Hope. In early August 1854 Colley embarked at Queenstown in the freight troopship 'Punjaub,' carrying some 300 men of various regiments to South Africa; and after a 'most prosperous voyage of fifty-nine days' reached Table Bay on the 30th of September. Great events had been happening in these two months. While the 'Punjaub' was ploughing her slow way through the Atlantic the Allies had embarked at Varna, landed at Old Fort, fought the battle of the Alma, and advanced upon Sevastopol. There stagnation had already supervened, the forward tide of victory stopped, and the only course of action which could have justified coming to the Crimea at that late season of the year was deliberately abandoned.

But of these events the exiles just landed in remote South Africa knew nothing. What a change in the transmission of news during the forty odd years that have since gone by! In the letters of that period we find all the freshness of strange scenes looked at for the first time, the details of march and 'campment related with the zest of youth quite satisfied with the novelty of its experiences. No allusion to the serious work going on in the Crimea, but plans for ascending Table Mountain, or little pen-and-ink sketches of Kaffir head-dresses, and Cape tiger lilies. How dwarfed would have seemed the loftiest pinnacle of Table Mountain, how tame the outlook to these

sea-weary soldiers, had they been greeted on arrival by the morning's message from the heights that looked down upon 'Sevastopol at bay'!

In a little pocket-book, kept partly in Ireland and continued on the voyage to the Cape and during the first year of his stay there, George Colley was wont to jot down a random thought, to sketch some ruined Irish church, a distant sail at sea, or the outline of a Kaffrarian mountain. This little book survived the toil and travel of a busy life, and in its faded pages I have been able to decipher imperfectly the following verses, which, from the pencil tracings of bits of ship-life close to them, appear to have been written at sea. The alterations and interlineations in the original text suggest a probability that the verses are his own. They run as follows:

Oh! be it mine, when Death must strike,
A soldier's death to die;
One gasp * * and then * *
From this poor dwelling fly.
Lord, ere I join the deadly strife
And battle's terrors dare,
First would I render soul and life
To Thine Almighty care.
And when grim Death in smoke-wreaths robed
Comes thundering o'er the scene,
What fear can reach the soldier's heart
Whose trust in Thee has been?
And if 'tis Thine immortal will
My spirit hence to call,
'Thy Will be done' I'll whisper still,
And ever trusting fall.

Many years afterwards, when he led the little column of troops to disaster on the dark summit of

the Majuba Hill, the babble and chatter of the time was hushed as men read how the deserted leader had stood before 'grim Death in smoke-wreaths robed,' waiting for the message from the rifle-muzzles of his enemies which was to answer the prayer sent up at sea twenty-seven years earlier.

CHAPTER III

SOUTH AFRICA

Life in Kaffraria—Sir George Grey—Engineering appointment—Wish to go to the Crimea—History and Napoleon—Habits of thinking

We may summarise the condition of South Africa in 1854 as follows.

The armed strength of the colony was massed on the eastern frontier to keep in check the Kaffir tribes beyond the Kei River. The northern frontier of the colony had been set at the Orange River, and extensive regions to the north of that boundary had been given up to the Dutch. In fact, we were about to begin a policy which practically amounted to the entire subjugation of the native races, and at the same moment we had planted the tree of separate Dutch sovereignty in a soil most congenial to its growth.

In October 1854 Colley landed at East London, a small village at the mouth of the Buffalo River; and, moving with his draft up country, reached Fort Hare in British Kaffraria in a week of easy marching. A line of fortified posts held the road from the sea to this advanced fort, and in one of these posts, named Middledrift, Colley settled down to the frontier life of the land. At first his letters are filled with descriptions of the scenery, the natives, and the adventures of the new life. He is delighted with everything.

I find plenty of amusement here. I sketch a great deal, and etch a little, carpenter and carve, and practise my flutina. I have also dug myself a small garden in which I am collecting bulbs. You can form no idea of the flowers of this country; one beautiful flower succeeds another, and they spring up in the most wonderful manner. You go out one day and the whole country is covered with some beautiful flower; two days later it is covered with a perfectly different but no less beautiful one, and all traces of the first have disappeared. A man who has any tastes whatever cannot fail to find plenty of means of gratifying them, provided there is no war. At present the country is quiet enough, but, still, it is advisable to be armed if you are going any distance by yourself, especially if on foot. I find so much employment that I have read but very little: only Ockley's 'History of the Saracens,' Addison's 'Knights Templars,' a little of Locke, a little of Madame de Staël, and enough mathematics to keep up most of my Sandhurst learning.[1]

In the same letter there is an account of a storm in the Amatola Mountains, where he had made an excursion to bring out some wood suitable for turnery work:

When I require an unusually large piece of timber I take a party of soldiers and go to a 'kloof' in the mountains, about seven miles from this, where I can get any sized wood. The last time I was there a tremendous thunderstorm came on; we soon had the lightning playing almost incessantly over us, and the thunder, confined by the sides of the kloof, was far beyond anything I had ever conceived. I stood a long time enjoying the scene, until a flash shivered a bush within fifteen yards of me, and going down into the ground threw the earth right over me as if a small mine had been exploded, and then I confess I thought it time to make the best of my way out of that. As we left the rain came down, and I never understood what rain was till that day; you could scarcely see twenty yards in front; it was like trying to look through a waterfall.

[1] November 7, 1854, to his elder sister.

And in another letter written to his mother in February 1855 we find a description of scenery in the Amatolas which brings vividly to the reader's mind the picture of these still secluded fastnesses :

When you get about halfway to the Hoek the road begins to get beautiful; you are entering a defile, the mountains gradually closing in on you. At first the road passes along a gently undulating country, covered with turf and interspersed with clumps. It is like an English park, only not so many fine trees, but more flowering shrubs. As the mountains close in, the ground becomes more uneven, the bush closer and more continuous, and the river winds so much that you cross it almost every mile. You go on this way for a mile or two, only able to see the upper parts of the mountains on each side; most of them are thickly wooded to the very tops, except where an occasional precipice shows its red face, a beautiful contrast to the green; suddenly you turn a corner and before you is the Boomah Pass, the road through which might rival any road for beauty. To the left rises a precipice about 1,000 feet in height. The road winds along 200 yards from the foot, the interval being filled by huge masses of rocks of a rich red which have fallen from above, and are almost hidden by small trees and luxuriant flowering creepers. Here and there you can follow the tracks of some gigantic mass lately fallen down, which has cleared every tree and bush and left a bare track behind.

To the right of the road there is a steep descent of about 300 feet, thickly covered with bush, and at the bottom of this dashes the river, so thickly hemmed in with trees that only now and then can you get a glimpse of it, though you can hear it roaring loud enough. On the other side of the river the mountains rise more regularly, presenting a magnificent mass of forest.

It was in this pass that the 6th suffered such loss at the beginning of the last war.

Two years prior to this time the last Kaffir War, which had begun in the close of 1850 with the attack in the Boomah Pass mentioned in the letter just quoted, had been brought to a close by Sir George Cathcart. The chiefs Sandili and Macomo, driven across the Kei, sued for peace; the paramount chief Kreli also submitted; the Amatolas and the Waterkloof had been cleared, forts and blockhouses erected, and the way opened for a permanent settlement of the country.

When, early in 1854, Sir George Cathcart quitted the Cape to take up those military duties which were in a few months to end in a soldier's death on the field of Inkerman, he left behind him in British Kaffraria a settled system of government. 'Her Majesty's Government,' wrote the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 'are actuated by an earnest desire to lay the foundations of institutions which may carry the blessings and privileges as well as the wealth and power of the British nation into South Africa, and, whilst appeasing the jealousies of sometimes conflicting races, to promote the security and prosperity, not only of those of British origin, but of all the Queen's subjects.'

Sir George Grey, who was selected to be the representative of the Home Government in the accomplishment of this new era of peace and progress, and to succeed Sir George Cathcart as Governor and High Commissioner in South Africa, was perhaps of all men the one best suited to the work. He had tact, immense ability, purpose, energy; he possessed the power of winning the love of those who worked under him. He gave his masters such straight and single-hearted service that

he told them even of their error; and when he left the Cape, six years after the date we have reached, it was under the shadow of official censure.

It was fortunate for young Colley, buried in a small post in Kaffraria, that the new Governor was not content to sit at the centre, but wished to see with his own eyes the condition of things at the circumference. Early in 1855 he arrived at Fort Hare, the headquarters of the 2nd 'Queen's.' Writing on February 25, Colley describes the visit and the impression left on his mind by a meeting with Sir George Grey:

> Since I wrote we have had great goings on here; for the Governor, General Jackson, and their staffs to the number of fifteen have been going round the outposts. After many changes of the day they finally arrived at Fort Hare on a Friday.
>
> Sir George Grey is excessively gentlemanly and civil (rather overwhelmingly so), speaks very little, but listens most attentively; with at the same time a little sly look in the eye, which gives him a very wide-awake expression.[2]

Then, we are told, the Governor walked round the fort, 'which he admired very much, and looked at my collection of birds, which he also admired (he is a great ornithologist, and I have one or two very rare birds).' Finally, it turned out that the silent little man, the good listener with the knowing look in his eye, had not been looking and listening for nothing, for only a few months after the date of his visit we find Lieutenant Colley appointed to lay out and build a large village near Kingwilliamstown, where Sir George Grey had decided to establish a body of pensioned military settlers, for which and other work he had just obtained a grant from the

[2] To his mother.

Home Government. The offer of this appointment came as a surprise to Colley:

I have been surveying a little. But I am afraid the day for surveying out here has rather gone by—a good survey, or even a good sketch or drawing, was sure to get one on when General Cathcart commanded; and several officers got appointments by surveys that were only so-so. At the same time Sir George Grey ought to have a great respect for surveying, for he owes his rise in life to it. When a captain in an infantry regiment he was sent to survey part of Australia, and that first brought him into notice and got him his present appointment.[3]

No doubt when Sir George was looking at the collection of birds in Lieutenant Colley's hut, he had also noticed sundry signs of survey work lying around. A later letter speaks of these prospects in connection with the young officer's great desire to get to the Crimea:

I am daily expecting to hear more about my engineering appointment. I look to the advantage it will be to me when I get to the Crimea. If I get on active service anywhere, the fact of having been selected for such an appointment among the 100 or 150 officers out here will be of immense service to me.[4]

In October 1855 Colley was hard at work at the Pensioners' Village. Writing from Kingwilliamstown, he gives an account of the work and how he entered upon it. The rivers just then were in high flood:

While I was writing to you at Middledrift, I heard that they were getting the post-bag across the river by means of ropes, so I went down to see it; and when it was opened I found letters from Maclean[5] requesting me to come to

[3] February 26, 1855, to his brother.

[4] August 20, 1855, to his mother.

[5] Colonel Maclean, British Commissioner for Kaffraria.

Kingwilliamstown as soon as the rivers would permit it as he was in a great hurry to have the Pensioners' Village begun. Accordingly, as I thought a little zeal would please him, I determined to cross the river as it was, and two hours later I swam it on my pony. It was the first time I had tried him in the water, or, indeed, swimming a horse at all, and I did not much like it; but my pony carried me manfully across. I found it rather difficult to sit on, for when first he found himself out of his depth he began making the most tremendous bounds, and the water seemed to lift my legs off his back; but he soon settled into a regular swim. I arrived here late that evening, and I have now regularly begun work. I have drawn out the plan, also sections and plans for the houses, and made estimates, and a pretty penny it will cost, I expect. It is no joke having to build 100 houses of brick and stone at a moment's notice, when the only artificers are to be found among the troops, and I believe the Governor expects it to be done within two months. I have just sent him up my plan, which I hope may please him.

I am nominally assistant surveyor, but in reality I work independently of every one and am quite a 'swell'! A captain, subaltern, and 100 men of the 45th, all the artificers that can be collected from the regiments out here, and 200 Fingoes under some police-officers, have been placed at my disposal; and I have also an almost unlimited command of money. Should this village succeed, others will be formed on the same plan. I now consider (for the first time in my life, I am afraid) that I am fairly earning my 14*s*. a day. I am glad to see that Sir William Molesworth has carried in Parliament a grant of 40,000*l*. for ten years, to be employed in this country, in whatever way Sir George Grey thinks most likely to prevent war.[6]

As the master builder was not yet quite twenty years of age, the work assumed proportionate importance, but, vigorously though he threw himself into it, his thoughts were often far away in the

[6] October 3, 1855, to his brother.

Crimea. His friend Birch was dead. How deeply he felt the loss of this early and devoted friend the letters of his lifetime tell.

We have just received the news of the affair of June 7, and I see another of my few old Sandhurst friends is gone. Lieutenant Stone of the 55th was at Sandhurst with me, and I took a great fancy to him there. Birch somehow did not like him much and used often to laugh at me for being so fond of him, and after we left Sandhurst we used often to have great arguments about him. Singularly enough he got his ensigncy in the 55th the same day Birch and I got our lieutenancies; in fact, he got the vacancy made by Birch's promotion, and I wrote from this country, little thinking poor Birch would never receive my letter, asking him to be kind to Stone for my sake, even if he still disliked him. My schoolboy friends are now nearly all gone, and I don't find somehow that I make any such friendships now. Of my Sandhurst friends one was killed in the Burmese War, and two in this war.[7]

After these reflections, he enters at length into his wish to get to the Crimea, a subject he has been writing about for months:

I cannot conceive why, with all this talk of the difficulties of getting soldiers, they do not send the regiments from this; they would get about 5,000 men, for the most part hardy well-seasoned soldiers accustomed to rough it, who would be worth three times their numbers of the boys they are getting out from England, while this would be just the country to send young recruits to—the climate is so healthy and invigorating. It was remarked in the Crimea that regiments that had been out here hardly lost any men by sickness, while others were fast melting away. One would have thought that would have been enough to open their eyes to the advantage of employing this fine body of men, instead of leaving them here doing nothing. I am almost afraid I wrote too late about getting a transfer to a

[7] Middledrift, August 20, 1855, to his mother.

Crimean regiment, and, if so, good-bye to all promotion for me.

The idea of going to the Crimea did not find favour with his relations, and in November 1855, writing to his mother, he returns to the subject:

With regard to the Crimea, I assure you I have looked at both sides of the question. It is not merely military advancement or honour, it is a case of success in life or entire failure. I don't think you let that weigh sufficiently. I am strong and healthy, and I believe this country strengthens one very much, and for the rest I must take the fortune of war. You don't seem to approve of my plan for the future as an old major. No more do I, I can assure you, but I don't see any alternative unless I go to the Crimea, for it is but a very vague hope that 'something will turn up.' If I did not think still that there was a very good chance of the regiment being ordered to the seat of war, fond as I am of my profession, I would really rather leave it, and while still young begin again at some other profession. I should be ashamed to go home as an officer and meet men, all of whom had been well earning their pay and position while I have been idling out here. I dare say you will think all this very foolish, but if I have succeeded in anything, it has always been owing to that pride of being able to keep my place, and that dread and shame of being passed, which often has overcome a boy's natural idleness. At Sandhurst and at Cheam I was never beat by a boy younger than myself, or passed by any one with whom I had a fair start.[8]

But the war with Russia was practically over when he wrote this letter, although the fact was not to be known in South Africa for months to come; and when finally the prospects of peace put an end to all chance of service in the field, he turns his thoughts to the Staff College, then just established, and urges his claims to be allowed to compete for entrance:

[8] Kingwilliamstown, November 20, 1855.

I have now got another plan to submit to my father. It is that he should write to the Horse Guards for permission for me to come home and go to the Senior Department, stating as his reasons that at Sandhurst I passed the best examination by three steps of my half, that before I had been out here a year I had obtained a good appointment, that I am willing to throw up this good appointment for the benefits I may derive from studying at the Senior Department, and that I am willing to undertake to go through the course in a year instead of eighteen months, the time allowed an old Sandhurst cadet. I know all this sounds very bragging, but it is, as it were, my last chance.[9]

This project was not to be carried out for some years, and the work of building and surveying went on at Kingwilliamstown through the whole of 1856. The necessities of village construction had been much increased by the decision of the home Government to send a large portion of the German Legion, disbanded at the close of the Crimean War, to the Cape of Good Hope as military settlers. An unfortunate and shortsighted policy, it may here be remarked, which has resulted not only in strengthening the whole fabric of Dutch settlement in South Africa, but also may be said to have begun the friendly intercourse between the old Dutch colonists and their Teutonic cousins, the last fruit of which was a famous telegram from Berlin.

Preparation for the Germans gives Colley plenty to do, and he writes to his brother in the latter months of 1856:

I take advantage of a comparatively idle day, afforded me by the steady rain, to write as long a letter as I have time for. I say comparative idleness, for I have ridden thirty miles through a storm of rain, and done four hours'

[9] Kingwilliamstown, December 28, 1855.

office work besides, but that is nothing to what I have been doing, and am likely to do for the next month or two. First of all I went out to Fort Grey to survey the military *rayon* around it in preparation for the Germans, some of whom they propose locating there. I got news that the Germans might be out very soon, and accordingly I went at it thirteen hours a day to try and get ready in time.

I have charge of a line of country about sixty miles long, with six posts, at each of which a village is to be laid out, surveyed, and the ground each man is to be given pegged out, the numbers at each place varying from one to five hundred. The selection of the site, the form of the village, and the numbers at each post are left to me. The total number I have to locate will be about 1,500. What I object to is the time I shall have to waste in the saddle, for while I am laying out villages at Fort Grey and East London, I have also to superintend the building of huts at the Yellow Woods fifty miles away, and I am expected to get it all done in three weeks. But though it will be severe work I rather like it, because I am to be entirely independent.[1]

Nor in this great pressure of active work is reading given up; the letters are filled with references to his books:

Many thanks for getting me the other volumes of Alison. I should like you to get, if I am not troubling you with too many commissions, the index volume which I see is published, the first four volumes of Dugald Stewart's collected works, and Alison's 'Marlborough.'

Some results of his reading of history are given in a letter to his mother:

I am a bit of a 'hero-worshipper,' and Napoleon is one of my peculiar objects of worship. Reading Alison first attracted my attention to his almost superhuman genius, and since then my military studies, in which it is generally

[1] Kingwilliamstown, October 9, 1856.

sufficient to prove anything good or bad by saying Napoleon did or did not do it, have made me look on him as a sort of superior being, so far removed in genius from all the rest of mankind that his decision sets any disputed subject at rest for ever. There are so many striking points about him too: the extraordinary ascendency he acquired over men, so that he even won over the crew of the ship that conveyed him to St. Helena; the universality of his genius, which enabled him to command an army, to frame laws, to write, to win men by his conversation, even to appear as a judge of the fine arts (the design for the Madeleine was, if I remember right, his choosing) with equal success. And so I can feel the enthusiastic attachment, almost adoration, of the old veteran when the idea of what may happen to his family falls to nothing at the idea :

'Mein Kaiser, mein Kaiser gefangen.' [2]

Such opinions seemed rather heretical to his people at home, and in a subsequent letter we find him defending his hero from attack. He has been advised to read Madame de Staël's 'French Revolution' and Constant's Memoirs, and this is his reply :

I have not read De Staël's 'Considérations' on the French Revolution, but I should have thought it was not a subject adapted to a woman's mind. Such a subject requires the most powerful, far-seeing, and reasoning mind; and, besides, she must be so *very* prejudiced, her father, whom she so admired, having been an important actor in the commencement of it. I have never read Constant's Memoirs, but I certainly will, for I delight in anything about Napoleon. But are they not written in rather a backbiting style? I fancy I remember reading some notice of them which abused Constant for following Napoleon and crying him up as long as anything was to be got from him, and then deserting him and abusing him as soon as he fell.

It is not so much as a military man I admire Napoleon as on account of the wonderful genius he shows in every-

[2] Kingwilliamstown, December 2, 1856.

thing. I have read some of his St. Helena memoirs, and there is hardly a single sentence of his conversation, excepting when speaking about personal matters or his imaginary grievances, which does not afford food for many an hour's thought.

When he was framing the Code Napoléon, the lawyers admitted that none of them took so generally a clear and correct view of the most knotty points, and even with all their practice could not with such a clear and sure eye unravel the intricacies of the old laws, and at once perceive their drift. It has often been brought against him that he rejected Fulton's invention of the steam engine; but I was glad to see that set at rest, and in his favour, by a letter of his to the Minister of the Interior, after seeing Fulton's plans, desiring him to lay them immediately before the Institute, as he discerns in them the germs of what may effect incalculable changes in the world. The letter is in the correspondence of Napoleon, now being published by the French Government. If it is not too immense, I shall certainly get that work; but I am afraid a hundred volumes would hardly hold it all.

I think what gives me the greatest idea of the *gigantic* power of his mind was on the occasion of his proposed invasion of England—when, after years of preparation, and just as the moment seemed at last to have arrived, he heard of the retreat of the French fleet before Sir R. Calder, which rendered necessary the total abandonment of the expedition. He sat down immediately and dictated the orders which conducted the whole French army from Boulogne to the centre of Austria, and produced the capitulation of Ulm—a set of orders the most able and perfect, down to the most minute details on record, begun ten minutes after the stunning news of the total failure of one of the most gigantic expeditions ever attempted![3]

These extracts will strike the reader with a sense of the breadth, capacity, and penetrating nature of this young officer's mind. In this remote part of

[3] July 10, 1857, to his mother.

the world, and while working with extraordinary physical energy, he has still contrived to build up within himself the mental strength that comes of knowledge. As we read deeper into the letters of this life the same characteristic meets us. Later in the career, when other forces come into play and the currents of strong ambitions are sweeping him forward, there will still be found always present in his judgment of men and affairs this power of independent thought. Now, in the midst of his labours in preparing for the German settlers, he begins to lay down for himself a clear system of thought, already looking forward to a time when he might possibly be called to wider fields of action and enterprise. In the last days of 1856 he writes:

I am becoming more and more attached to the army every day; every moment I can spare is devoted to military works, until even the dry regimental details which I used to think so stupid and uninteresting are beginning to appear in a new light to me. If I can get even moderate promotion now, I don't think I would leave the army whatever prospects might open to me in another direction.

I am young, ambitious, and confident—three things which ought to enable one to work out something.

I was very much amused with your account of your visit to Crom and your tour in general: and all the grand company and the prodigy clergyman! I can quite understand a man of great memory, but not much mind, not a great thinker, who has read every book in the world and knows everything that can be said on any subject, but has really never sufficiently thought it over to come to a clear idea on the subject himself. I was very much struck by coming across this in some book, 'It is not by reading but by thinking that an educated man is formed;' and immediately afterwards a passage in that kind letter of Uncle Stuart's[4] which you copied for me, 'There are so few

[4] Mr. Stuart Trench, author of 'Realities of Irish Life.'

really working, or rather thinking, men.' This opened my eyes and made me think a bit, and it very soon struck me that many men of great talents do so little because in their leisure they don't think, and when a subject is suddenly brought before them, they haven't time to form an opinion; while if a man is always thinking there are very few subjects likely to come before him that he has not thought over, and to a certain extent formed an opinion on already. So I have determined to *make* myself think—I have lots of *that* sort of leisure while I am riding from place to place; and latterly, instead of conjuring up my 'Feilounlands'—imagining impossibilities, and building castles in the air on them as I used to be very apt to do when I had not anything immediately connected with my work to engross my attention—I have given myself some subject to think over and (if it is a debatable one) come to a conclusion one way or the other. I dare say you will laugh at my idea and put it down among good resolutions in general, but I already feel it coming more natural to me, and find the advantage of it.[5]

To this habit of deep and earnest thinking first begun in the long lonely rides among the wilds of Kaffraria, he undoubtedly owed the quick, unprejudiced judgment, the clear and lucid power of expression, which made him a force in the India of twenty years later, when he was brought suddenly into contact with men whose previous lives had made them experts in the working and management of great Asiatic communities.

[5] Kingwilliamstown, December 18, 1856, to his elder sister.

CHAPTER IV

KAFFRARIA

The false prophetess—The Kaffirs—Gawler's expedition—Kreli—Magistracy—Death of Tola—Good-bye to the Kaffirs.

WHILE the work of German colonisation was progressing in that part of Kaffraria which had been declared British, unexpected events were developing in the regions north of the Kei River, where the natives still held nominal possession of the land.

A prophetess had arisen among the followers of the paramount chief, Kreli—a prophetess whom, unfortunately for themselves, the people delighted to honour. It was the season of the year when the green slopes around the kraals were always dotted with patches of freshly turned red earth; when the sowing of the Indian corn was to be done, the crop which, together with milk, and occasionally the flesh of oxen, forms the staple food of the Kaffir people. But this year there was to be no hoeing of the ground, no planting of seed. The prophetess had solemnly decreed that food would be no longer necessary; and not only were the prospects of the coming year's harvest to be sacrificed, but all existing stores of corn were to be destroyed, all cattle and other live stock were to be killed, and the land was to be left a hungry waste. And then? Well, then

there would be seen such things as had never been seen in the world before. The ancestors of the tribes, the heroes whose deeds song and tradition still told of, were to rise from their graves, bringing with them abundant supplies of the choicest food; cattle would come, too, in countless numbers; and this wonderful resurrection of man and beast was to be quickly followed by the triumph of the black race, and the disappearance of the white from the soil of South Africa. Considerably more than half the entire population of Kaffirland, both without and within the British boundary, believed this monstrous tissue of absurdity, left their lands untilled, slew their cattle, destroyed their stores of grain, and then sat down to await the resurrection of their ancestors. The prophetess had fixed the full moon of February, 1857, as the day upon which the grand cataclysm was to take place. The sun would rise that morning, she said, only to wander a little while above the horizon; it would then set in the east, and its disappearance would be the signal for a hurricane of surpassing fury to rise and sweep the white man from the land.

But, on the morning of February 17, the full moon set and the sun rose, only to find thousands of foodless people wandering over the hills of Kaffraria. Then began a terrible famine among the deluded Kaffirs. There was no food in all the land, save such as the forests afforded in wild roots and berries. Ten months had to elapse before another harvest could bring relief. The tribes broke up in despair; thousands flocked into the colony in search of work and food. It was calculated that fully 25,000 natives perished in the year 1857, and 100,000 fled from the

land. No war had ever brought upon them such havoc as their own fatuity had caused.

And here we may devote a few words to the singular people who, under the general denomination of Kaffirs, have figured so largely in the annals of our colonial wars during the past seventy or eighty years. Some five or six centuries ago, a vast host of black men moved south from the interior swamps of equatorial Africa. They bore the name of Guigas; they marched under rigid rules of military discipline; wherever they encountered tribes of the aboriginal inhabitants, these had to retire before the greater strength and ferocity of the newcomers. We read of these conquering savages in the early records of the Portuguese missionaries, and in the narrative, published in 'Hakluyt,' of an English sailor named Battel, who, escaping from a ship on the coast of Angola, joined these savages and became a chief among them. For the next two hundred years the Guigas are lost sight of.

Their rate of advance southward was slow, and in the vast expanses between the Vaal River and the Zambesi there was room for delay. The arid character of the Atlantic seaboard, as the continent narrows towards the Cape of Good Hope, doubtless forced this migrating horde to the eastern or Indian Ocean shore; there, in the innumerable glens and fastnesses of the Drakensburg, and by the green pastures of the Amatolas, the human wave rested at last in comparative quiet. The Hottentots and the Bushmen were driven out, and the coast region which lies between the Alagoa and Delagoa Bays became the home of the Kaffir—a name given by the Arab traders, and adopted by the Portuguese settlers

at Mozambique, and covering generally the subdivisions since named Gaikas, Galegas, Zulus, Amapondas, &c.

Thus when the early Dutch settlers first came in contact with the Kaffir tribes on the eastern frontier of the colony they found a race of warriors very different from the Hottentot tribes previously encountered. They were pure blacks, of stalwart muscular frames; they had ceremonies for marriage, laws for the chase, and rules for the division of spoil in war; they understood how to smelt iron and to work copper; they practised the rite of circumcision, believed in witchcraft, had codes of fines and punishments. They used the spear and shield, took snuff, and made a beer from millet which was palatable and refreshing. The men milked the cows, built the kraals, and followed the chase; the women tilled the ground and attended to the household duties.

Towards the close of the year 1857 the full effects of the Kaffir famine had become terribly apparent. Scattered through Colley's letters we come frequently upon references to this famine, and to the strange delusion that had produced it. It was believed that the prophetess was only a tool in the hands of the paramount chief, Kreli, and his advisers, and that the whole purpose of the destruction of food was to bring about a state of national destitution which would oblige the Kaffirs to go to war with the English. That the chiefs looked to conflict as the result of the fulfilment of the prophecy was doubtless true; but they believed it was the promised resurrection, not the preliminary killing of the cattle, which, literally as well as figuratively, would give them the sinews of war.

Before the middle of 1857 any danger of hostilities was over. The tribes were utterly broken in spirit and powerless through physical weakness, and when later in the year the news of the mutiny in India reached the Cape it was easy to spare 5,000 seasoned soldiers for Indian service. The 'Queen's' Regiment was not destined to proceed on active service to India. 'Delhi has fallen,'[1] writes Colley in November, 'so I presume the principal bloodshed will have ceased. They are sending on more troops from this, but I think it is pretty definitely settled that we remain here. The General cannot afford to lose his quartermaster-general, his butler, groom, servants, and escort, all of whom come from our regiment.'

Besides this extract, which shows upon what trifles the careers of men may turn, there are passages that tell how the writer's mind is busy in hammering out its tracks of thought, one of which leads him to insist that the motto 'Noblesse oblige' applies with equal truth to the aristocracy of talent:

I have often heard of the Archbishop's [Whately's] dinner parties, and that he is exceedingly eccentric and amusing, but apt to be disagreeable and rude, so I suppose you should look on it as a great compliment his having been civil to you. I have rather a dread of those clever rude men; nothing is more amusing than to hear a civil skirmish between two men clever at repartee; but a rude retort, no matter how clever or how well deserved, always makes me inclined to take the other person's part. It often occurred to me, in reading Johnson's sayings, that it was fortunate he was such a big man or he might have been kicked out of the house for some of them—and serve him right.[2]

[1] November 25, 1857, to his elder sister (now Mrs. Vernon).

[2] November 25, 1857, to Mrs. Vernon.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny it was decided to add second battalions to twenty-six regiments of the line. To Colley's great disappointment, this measure brought no regimental promotion:

> They have not given a single step in the regiment, and, what is harder to bear, half the captains who are brought in are junior to me! It is a very heavy blow to one ambitious to rise.[3]

Two months later his letters show how keenly his thoughts are running ahead of this check:

> I am gradually coming to look upon Sandhurst as my last resource, and if that fails and they will not allow a man any possible opening by which to work his way up, why, I must either resign myself to an indolent objectless life; or (an idea which has several times presented itself to me) try and enter the Prussian service, where, I believe, every one is allowed a fair chance, and, indeed, encouraged to show what he has in him.[4]

And now, just when professional prospects appeared at their worst, an opportunity opened most unexpectedly of 'showing what was in him.' This 'opening' is described by Colley in a letter written from Kingwilliamstown to his brother in February 1858. The letter shows, too, how completely the writer had now acquired the habit of easy description and analysis of cause and effect, even under the pressure of sudden emergency and rapid action:

> As I am just ordered off on an expedition, during which I may not have any opportunity of writing, I take advantage of the few spare minutes I can find between the cares of providing horses, camp equipage, food, &c., for the journey,

[3] East London, November 25, 1857, to Mrs. Vernon.

[4] Kingwilliamstown, January 16, 1858, to Mrs. Vernon.

to write a few lines to set people's minds at ease at home, if they do not hear from me by next mail.

I am going up with Major Gawler, on an expedition to the Bashee, a river about 120 miles from this, to take possession of the country between the Kei and the Bashee. I have to make a rough survey of the country, and report on its capabilities for agriculture, sheep farming, &c., the direction in which roads should be made, and whether any of the mouths of the rivers could be made into harbours. But, of course, as long as there is any prospect of fighting I remain with Gawler. I think it is hardly likely the present inhabitants will give up the country without a few scrimmages—and if they do show any inclination for fighting, Gawler is the man to gratify them to their hearts' content. He is one of the Kaffir resident magistrates, and a most able and indefatigable one. His only fault is an over contempt of danger, which makes him run his head into places he has no business to go into.

We have already noticed Sir George Grey's policy of frontier colonisation, frontier roads and forts. A later development, and one of which the methods were more open to question, was the subversion of the power of the native chiefs. The Transkei expedition on which Colley was now starting sprang out of this policy. His letter goes on to describe its causes and objects.

The tribe against which all our wars have been, and which embraces all the Kaffirs who occupy British Kaffraria, is the Galekas. Their country extends from the Bashee (about sixty miles beyond the Kei) to the Keiskama. On the other side of the Bashee come the Amapondas, under Faku, who extend to near Natal. The Governor now aims at entirely destroying the Galekas as a nation. Thanks to the famine, he has done that pretty effectually, by transporting all the chiefs who were most to be dreaded, and scattering their people as servants all over the colony. But Kreli, the paramount chief, still remains living between the

Kei and the Bashee, and, although his people were also scattered by the famine, they have begun to reassemble round him since this year's crop has ripened.

The object of our expedition is either to capture him, or to drive him beyond the Bashee. If we catch him, he will be transported; and if we drive him across the Bashee he will cease to be an independent chief, and become subject to Faku; in either case, the last remnants of the nationality of the Galekas, our inveterate and obstinate enemies, will be extinguished. The country between the Kei and Bashee will be annexed and occupied by Gawler's faithful Kaffirs until such time as it may be filled up by English colonists. You may wonder why a regiment should not be sent instead. But a regiment marching in that direction would be looked upon as an open declaration of war, and would bring every Kaffir in the country about our ears, which would be unpleasant just when our forces are so much required for India; while our expedition merely wears the colour of one party of Kaffirs going to chastise another for some depredation which Kreli's men have been committing.

It certainly bears a little the aspect of a 'filibustering' expedition, as the country we are invading is at peace with us, and does not in any way owe allegiance to us; our rule is only supposed to extend to the Kei. But I leave all that on the Governor's conscience, and for my own part I think it is the most delightful expedition any one could have proposed—surveying an entirely new country hardly known to us, with a little excitement to give it zest, and I believe splendid shooting in some parts. I have got four horses, and expect to have plenty of work for them all, as I have about a thousand square miles to survey.

The Governor was exceedingly civil about it; told me he gave me the offer, as he thought it was an expedition I should like, and more of an 'opening' than any other I was likely to find in Kaffraria; but did not wish me to go if I did not like the expedition or preferred the work I was employed on down here. Of course I accepted the offer most thankfully.

A few days later they started, and the 'surveyor-general to the expedition' writes from the Bashee River:

You have no idea what a funny procession we made, we four riding at the head, followed by all the chiefs and great men on horseback, and then the main body, 400 Kaffirs, on foot (armed in the most various manner with guns of all shapes, assegais, &c., and singing a war song), and a drove of cattle which was to feed us.[5]

The Bashee was reached without any opposition. 'We marched ready for a scrimmage at any moment, but Kreli had been too much taken by surprise, and his people too much weakened and scattered by the cattle-killing and subsequent famine, to make any stand.'[6] From that time, February 1858, the unfortunate Kreli was an exile and wanderer in various parts of Kaffraria. In one letter we find him thus described:

Poor Kreli! He has had rather a sudden fall. Two years ago he was the greatest chief in South Africa. Now he is an outlaw with no country or cattle—barely able to muster 200 followers, and obliged to keep shifting his hiding-place to avoid being discovered by us. I foresee endless trouble from him if we cannot succeed in capturing him or driving him entirely away from this neighbourhood. I have a great fancy, though, to see him; he is the only Kaffir chief who seems to have any of the grandeur of the savage. It is astonishing the influence he exerts over the Kaffirs, and even over Englishmen who have been brought much into contact with him. Mr. Fynn, our interpreter, who was brought up almost at his kraal, quite reveres him, and constantly says, 'Oh, but you should see him; you could not help admiring him and liking him if you saw him.' But I am afraid, however much I might admire or like him, it would not prevent

[5] March 25, 1858, to his younger sister. [6] *Ibid.*

my packing him off a prisoner if I ever got him into my clutches.[7]

Major Gawler, the leader of the expedition, was no ordinary officer. His portrait is thus sketched in the correspondence:

He is a small and very unremarkable-looking man, the only good feature about him being a very high forehead; silent, shy, and rather *gauche* in society, but talkative enough and very amusing when among those he is intimate with; very fiery-tempered, though to me he is always most courteous, even if I happen to speak to him in the middle of a burst of temper; brave to rashness when his own life only is concerned, though careful enough where others are involved; energetic, determined, and persevering, even to obstinacy. He is a man to get on wherever he goes, and if he only has opportunity will make himself a name, I think. He is the most extraordinary mixture of gravity and fun I ever came across—a very thinking man, owing the success of his schemes more to having thought everything over in every possible way than to any 'inspirations of genius'—in fact, always thinking.

He is very well informed and a great lover of poetry. I never discovered it till one morning as we were lying in my patrol tent he jumped up with:

> 'The antlered monarch of the waste
> Sprang from his heathery couch in haste.'

I took him up with:

> 'But ere his fleet career he took,
> The sandflies from his flanks he shook.'

He carried on the quotation, and I took him up again, till between us we ran right through 'The Lady of the Lake,' Fynn (who was outside) in intense astonishment to know what in the world we were talking of![8]

[7] Camp on the Bashee River, June 28, 1858, to his younger sister.

[8] Camp on the Umgwali River, April 23, 1858, to his sister, Mrs. Vernon.

Colley remained on the Bashee River 'doing Viceroy' in Major Gawler's absence, surveying, travelling, hearing Kaffir lawsuits, and studying the manners and customs of the native races. He was now in his twenty-third year, and in the month of May a choice of two widely different careers was open to him. His brother-in-law, Mr. John Vernon, a gentleman holding large land agencies in Ireland, invited him to enter as a partner in the business, retiring of course from the army. Had this offer been made a few months earlier, when lack of promotion and dearth of outlook had caused the young officer to take a despondent view of his professional future, it might possibly have met with a favourable response.

Almost simultaneously Colonel Maclean (Commissioner for Kaffraria) recommended him (in succession to Major Gawler, now ordered to India) for the post of 'Special Magistrate' in charge of Kreli's country, the portion of the Transkei recently annexed by Gawler's expedition. In a letter dated July 25 he writes:

> I have already spoken of the favourable change in my army prospects which various things (the Staff College, &c.) have lately effected, independently of this magistracy; and without being very sanguine as to what the magistracy may lead to, it certainly places me in a different position from what I previously occupied, and is no small encouragement, as showing that despite adverse circumstances some opening is almost sure to turn up for any one who is willing to think and work.[9]

Later on he writes to his sister:

> I do enjoy this life uncommonly, despite the want of companionship.

[9] Camp on the Bashee, July 25, 1858, to his mother.

Whether it is from my beard or not, I can't say; but I am generally taken to be about twenty-eight, and a police officer only two days ago guessed me at thirty. I seldom undeceive people, for it would require greater efforts to gain and maintain my influence over my people, if they knew they had only a boy to deal with. I am glad, however, to find that I am steadily gaining influence, especially with the chiefs across the Bashee. At first those in the immediate neighbourhood were humble and abject, being in momentary dread lest the 'commando' should cross the river and attack them, while those at a distance were impertinent and wished to know 'who was this Englishman who had come into Kreli's country and called himself a chief?' But now I am consulted by the chiefs both near and far, although the fear of being attacked has worn off.

I have tried to make it a rule never to undertake anything till I have thought it well over, and then never to allow anything to prevent its being carried out. And now you mustn't laugh at all my grave discourses, as if I had suddenly had the responsibility of a Prime Minister thrown on my shoulders. Although I generally wrote laughingly, I had many a serious thought as to whether I was old and experienced enough for this appointment—but that invaluable bump of self-esteem carried me through![1]

And then, after pictures of the wild life he is leading, and bits from 'the only books up here, some small editions of the poets,' come comments upon his refusal to accept Mr. Vernon's offer. He writes of his own 'stirring and exciting profession, with the stimulus of something constantly to look forward to,' and contrasts it with the sedentary and monotonous life of a civilian at home. His 'numerous pursuits' and adventurous life make up to him for a certain sense of social isolation which during his last year or two in Kaffraria seems now and then to have

[1] Idutsha, September 28, 1858, to Mrs. Vernon.

pressed upon him. Not that he at all looks upon himself as a 'lone spirit.' 'All such Byronic ideas,' he writes, 'are soon knocked out of one's head by a little hard and active work. But it adds to my ambition and desire of distinction—naturally strong.'

At all events he will not give up his independent and varied life. 'You know,'[2] he says (alluding to Audley Egerton in Bulwer Lytton's 'My Novel'), 'I am but half a domestic animal myself, and should prefer the exciting rivalry of the race of life to sitting down quietly at home with my wife and children.'

The September letter already quoted announces the ratification by Sir George Grey of his appointment. He was now border magistrate and 'Chief' on the Bashee River—a position of independence and responsibility such as has seldom fallen to the lot of one so young. His control extended over a region of 5,000 square miles. He held the frontier post, the outwork of civilisation. Between him and the line of frontier forts held by regular troops lay forty miles of rugged country peopled only by Kaffirs. Beyond, to the north, for more than 200 miles, spread independent Kaffraria. It was all a land of rich and varied scenery—crag, kloof, and precipice, undulating plain and broad valley, forests of flowering trees, foaming rivers, and streams that wind through valleys deep in grass and lustrous in the fervid bloom of semi-tropical shrubs—a land of perpetual verdure, of pure and health-giving breezes, and for nine months out of the year of climate unsurpassed on the globe.

[2] November 25, 1857, to Mrs. Vernon.

Hitherto George Colley had held in this region a subordinate position, but now he was supreme. If superabundant energy, a mind trained to think and decide for itself, great determination, and physical hardihood of no common order could achieve distinction, it would be his. The state of the frontier gave ample scope for enterprise. After the famine troubles Sir George Grey determined, as we have seen, to break the power of the Kaffir chiefs, and many of the leaders had now been captured and imprisoned on irrelevant charges such as cattle-stealing. Amongst others Macomo, the greatest politician and best warrior in Kaffraria, was undergoing a sentence of twenty years' imprisonment at Capetown.

Of course where cattle-stealing is so universal as it is among the Kaffirs, the Governor has only to say that he wishes any particular man out of the way, and if you can only catch him, there is no difficulty in raking up evidence to show that he was once engaged in a theft of cattle, and he is transported accordingly.[3]

This plan of the Governor's, and still more the famine, had rendered any combined action on the part of the tribes impossible. But there were still small bands of desperate men who, hiding in some of the thickly wooded fastnesses of the mountains or equally impenetrable districts by the sea-shore, maintained a hopeless state of hostility, issuing at times from their retreats and waylaying transport wagons or cutting off some small patrol of friendly natives. These men preferred their chances of freedom in the bush to the probability of finding themselves, sooner or later, inmates of the dreaded and dreary Robbin Island amid the waves of Table Bay. Among these bold

[3] February 8, 1858, to his brother.

outlaws there was one, Tola by name, who in past wars had given much trouble. A year or two prior to the time we are dealing with, he had been imprisoned, but he had escaped, and was at large in some of the fastnesses between the Buffalo and Kei Rivers. Shortly before Christmas 1858, Colley determined to make another attempt to capture this chief. Twice he had been out after him, under Gawler's command, each time without success; now he was to try it alone. He believed Tola to be the chief who in a previous Kaffir war had 'killed so many of our Grenadiers in the Fish River Bush and roasted alive those he caught,' and, as he says in one of his letters, he had a kind of personal quarrel with him on that score:

About a fortnight ago I heard that a man had been attacked and wounded at the Kei drift (about halfway between my place and Kingwilliamstown), and had recognised Tola among his attackers. Without telling any one of my intentions, I fell in about sixty of my police at daylight the next morning, marched sixty miles in two days, halting in the afternoon about ten miles from the Kei. As soon as it was dark I pushed on, descended into the valley of the Kei, and, dividing my men, crossed the river at three points, trusting to find him by the light of his fires, as, the night being cold and rainy, they would be sure to light some. Two of my detachments reached the rendezvous at daylight the next morning without having seen anything; the third discovered his fires in the bush and made for them, but found him there with twenty-five men instead of eight as I had expected. My police, though only sixteen strong, attacked them, but Tola, who was considered to be the best fighting man in Kaffirland, soon rallied his men and drove my police back, following them back until they arrived near the rendezvous. The alarm having been given, we came up with some fresh men to their rescue, and a smart hand-to-

hand skirmish ensued, which ended in Tola's band being entirely dispersed, leaving Tola, his two sons, and five of his men dead on the field. Our loss was two of my police killed. Tola fought splendidly. When the fresh men came up his people began to give, but Tola called out, 'Oh, my men, don't run! Follow me!' His two sons and one or two others sprang to his side and he made a dash into the centre of my police, and such was the prestige of his name that none of them dared face him, until an old sergeant of great repute for courage met him, and, after a short hand-to-hand combat with assegais, killed him.

The next day I got a letter from Colonel Maclean, in great alarm at the news that Tola had collected a formidable band, and that men were joining him from all quarters; and telling me that as it was so distant from my place, he had put the matter in the hands of another magistrate who was much nearer, and whom he had desired to collect a hundred or a hundred and fifty men, and endeavour to break up this band; but that if I could conveniently render him assistance he would be glad. You may fancy I rather chuckled at having done it while they were talking about it.

Tola was a noted man, and his death is felt as a relief all over the frontier; and I have received high encomiums from Colonel Maclean.

I can't help ascribing Basil's lines to Tola:

'Fell as he was in deed and mind,
He left no bolder heart behind.'[4]

Another year went by; a year of long and hazardous rides, of administrative work among his Kaffirs, of reading, and studying his profession, and of writing letters so full of incident, adventure, observation and criticism, that one or two more may be quoted. The first pays a tribute to the loyalty of the Kaffirs:

You have taken rather too dark a view of my position among 'my savages.' It is true I have no Europeans to

[4] Kingwilliamstown, December 29, 1858, to Mrs. Vernon.

help me here, but I have many very faithful Kaffirs among whom I would trust my life as willingly as among the same number of Europeans, and my property more willingly. They have very strong ideas of honour on some points, and whatever plots there might be against my authority I have no fear of any against my life. Even were I to know that my people were united to throw off their obedience to me and to Government, I would remain here to the very last with confidence, knowing that they would allow me to retire unmolested.[5]

Another letter describes a system which has been the source of much of our trouble in South Africa.

The Kaffirs say, and with considerable justice, that no one has ever yet gained by intercourse with the English Government; there could not be a more favourable opportunity for refuting this. We are constantly asserting that we do not fight for the sake of conquest, but in self-defence; there could not be a better proof than, after punishing a chief who has been almost constantly plotting against us, to cede a large part of his country to a chief who has shown himself friendly to us.

Against all this there is only the insatiable grasping of the colonists for more land. They have already ten times as much land as they can really fill, and there are incessant complaints of the thinness of the European population on the frontier, and yet by constantly extending the frontier they thin the population still more. Every man who can muster half a dozen cows and a score of sheep thinks himself entitled to a farm of two or three thousand acres, and ill-used if he does not get one. From this constant move and spread, one sees magnificent farms of perhaps three thousand acres, of which a thousand is beautiful rich arable land, held by a man who makes no further use of it than to rear fifty or sixty head of cattle or a few hundred sheep on it, and cultivate about twenty acres. I must say I think the country occupied by Kaffirs looks much less desolate

[5] Idutsha, October 4, 1858, to his mother.

and uncivilised than that occupied by the English. Except in the immediate neighbourhood of a town you see ten times the population, ten times the number of cattle, and twice as much land under cultivation in the Kaffir districts.[6]

The first chapter of Colley's life in South Africa was now drawing to a close. War had been declared with China; the 'Queen's' was to go thither. The news came very suddenly to the frontier post at Idutsha one evening in December, when Colley was sitting writing to his mother.

Nine P.M. Off to China! So there goes Staff, Brevet Majority, and all my castles in the air! Colonel Maclean wishes me to remain, and says that, with my permission, he will apply to the Commander-in-Chief for authority for me to do so, and has no doubt of success. But, though I feel pretty confident that I should see more fighting here in the course of another two years than I shall in China (and here I should fight as 'top-sawyer,' instead of as a wretched subaltern), still the regiment is supposed to be going on active service, so of course I shall request Colonel Maclean *not* to apply.

Well, at any rate, I am in a fair way of seeing something of the world. You may look out for next letter being dated Imperial Palace, Pekin.[7]

In this letter we get a glimpse of the soldiers that stood in the battalions of the British army up to the time of the Crimean War. The 'Queen's' was one of the few regiments still having in its ranks these matchless men.

It is a satisfaction to go on service with such a fine body of men. I saw them on parade the other day (we have nearly all the regiment at Kingwilliamstown), and certainly they were a magnificent regiment. The contrast between

[6] Idutsha, July 26, 1859, to his mother.

[7] Idutsha, December 27, 1859.

them and regiments lately come here from other stations is perfectly ridiculous.

Then came the good-bye to the Kaffirs:

Early in the morning the people began to assemble at a little distance from my house, and by 10 o'clock all the chiefs and headmen, each attended by a counsellor and a few followers, had arrived.

Presently one of the chiefs came and said the people were assembled. Would I come and hear their words? The people were squatted on the grass, forming about half or three-quarters of a circle, leaving at the top a vacant space in the middle of which was a tree, under whose shade I used often to sit when hearing cases; this was left as my throne. The chiefs sat a little in front, their counsellors and headmen a little behind them, and behind them again the people in a double or treble line. As I came up and took my place under the tree I was received with a deep 'Moro, inkos,' or 'Moro, maho' ('moro' is a kind of corruption of our 'morrow,' and is the usual Kaffir salutation; the first syllable is drawn out very long and deep; 'inkos' is chief, 'maho' father, and the chiefs generally address me as the latter). This deep-toned salutation from three or four hundred mouths at once has a most curious effect. Rising to receive any one forms no part of Kaffir etiquette—they all remained sitting or lying.

Siwani, Umhala's son, and the principal chief among my people, then addressed me. He thanked me for my words; said if they had been allowed any choice in the matter they would not have let me go; but as the Queen ordered it he supposed there was no help; that Gawler and I had brought them there, that Gawler was gone, and now I was going, and they would have no one left who knew them and to whom they could look. . . . Every chief, headman, and some of the sergeants of my police made a speech in turn, expressive of their regret at losing me. Some were comical (at least to English ears), some very poetical in language and ideas. I was 'the cow that gave much good milk' (the highest compliment a Kaffir thinks he can pay to a

man's liberality); 'the great bull that protected the herd;' the 'great eagle of the Bashee under whose wings they had found shelter;' the 'lion whose roar had sufficed to frighten their enemies from coming nearer,' &c.

It is astonishing how closely their terms and expressions resemble those of Scripture: 'Eating of the fat of the land,' 'the light of thy countenance will no longer shine on us,' 'a land flowing with milk'—all these are common Kaffir expressions. The prettiest speech made was by Sigidi, a chief next in rank to Siwani, and closely related to Kreli. He is a thoroughly savage Kaffir, has seen very little of the English, and not made the smallest step towards civilisation. He is a young man, slight and graceful, with an exceedingly pleasant countenance; small features, beautiful teeth and ears, hands and feet that any English lady might envy. He is of some repute among the Kaffirs as an orator, and, certainly, his language was wonderfully beautiful and poetic—so much so that I should be afraid to convey any of his speech, adorned as it was by his graceful action. The following, which was a speech made by one of the minor chiefs, as well as I can recollect it, may serve as a specimen of the general style:

'Oh! my chief, this is heavy news that my ears have heard to-day. Why does Government treat us so and take our father from us? If there were green fields all the way to where he is going, his children would follow him, but the black man cannot travel on the sea—he dies on it.

'When we came up here the wolves followed us, but you turned on them and killed the old he-wolf, and the rest fled. They tried to come again, but, like the bull, you watched for the herd while it was grazing, and the herd has grown fat. But where now is our bull with the high crest? When the wolves see he is gone, they will collect again from all quarters, and the herd will be scattered over the face of the earth. Why did you bring us here to leave us?'[8]

When the speech-making was over, Colley rose to go. All crowded round to shake hands. 'I was

[8] Idutsha, December 28, 1859, to his younger sister.

carried backwards and forwards by the mass, and it was at least twenty minutes before I could get free of all the black hands trying to grasp mine. At last I mounted my horse—there was another loud "Moro" and "Bonya Englela" (a good journey)—and I cantered off. So ended my life among the Kaffirs.'

CHAPTER V

CHINA

H.M.S. 'Vulcan'—Taking the forts on the Peiho—Chinese guns, diplomacy, and markets—Pekin—The prisoners—The Summer Palace.

On February 23, 1860, the 2nd 'Queen's' embarked at East London on board H.M.S. 'Vulcan' for China. 'A horrible old tub,' writes Colley; 'a man-of-war turned into a troopship, the upper deck being reserved for the naval officers and sailors, the two lower ones for the military officers and soldiers, so that in bad weather—or, indeed, unless it is very fine—we have to live entirely by lamplight, which in hot weather is most oppressive.' Truly a sensible method of conveying soldiers in a state of health and prowess to a scene of conflict, where at the moment of landing they will probably be exposed to the fullest power of an enemy to destroy them!

On the 7th we sighted Java, and since then every hour unfolds some fresh and more beautiful panorama—the skies are cloudless, the sea like a lake, with just sufficient breeze to keep the air fresh, while on each side are Java, Sumatra, and innumerable smaller islands in all the beauty of tropical vegetation.[1]

Then through the Straits of Sunda and up to Banca, that passage so fatal to sailors, where again the scene suddenly changed.

The nearest approach to hell I have ever seen or could

[1] Off Sumatra, April 11, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

have dreamt of. On each side the shores of Banca and Sumatra, a mile or two distant, stretch away in a long, low, unbroken line of rank swampy forest—from the edge of which the mud reaches out till it is lost in the equally muddy waters; as far as the eye can reach, there does not seem to be a mound six feet high. The sun strikes down with a deadly vertical glare, under which the decks of the ship blister, and even the water seems to swelter and putrefy and has an unpleasant smell. As the ship glides through, it seems to make way heavily and close in at once without a ripple. In perfect unison with the scene was the melancholy-looking wreck of a ship, aground on a mud bank, and the half-putrid body of a sailor which floated past the ship, and slimy snakes the only living things to be seen—the whole scene so dreary, oh! so dreary! The recollection of those Straits hangs on my mind like a nightmare.[2]

Then to Singapore and Hong-kong, where a hundred types of Asia are to be seen—Chinese, Malays, Javanese, Hindus—compared with whom 'I think my dear old Kaffirs are far and away the finest race. The Malays and Javanese are chattering monkeys, not to be named in the same list with them as men. I have seen nothing to compare with the magnificent limbs, easy and graceful motion, and upright and dignified bearing of my dear old Kaffirs.'

On June 23 the 'Vulcan' reached the rendezvous in Ta-lien-wan Bay, at the entrance to the Gulf of Pechili, where the army for the invasion of China was assembled previous to crossing the gulf to the Peiho River.

Here the 'Queen's' got on shore, and right glad must they have been, after four months of imprisonment in these foul-smelling dark lower decks, to feel solid ground again under foot. After a month's delay at Ta-lien-wan, a place then unmarked on any

[2] Chinese journal.

maps, but now grown famous as the probable terminus of the Russian Pacific Railway, the whole fleet of warships and transports started on July 26, 'a beautiful day and a most magnificent sight, lines of sails extending to the horizon in every direction.' Two days later they came to anchor off the Peiho River. Another shift of anchorage brought the fleet, now joined by the French ships, to a spot between the Peiho and the Peitang forts, still eight miles from shore.

Here it was settled that our brigade and 3,000 of the French were to force a landing, attack the Peitang forts in concert with the gunboats, and cover the disembarkation of the rest of the forces, and on August 1 we started with three days' provisions and whatever we could carry on our shoulders. The troops were in large flat-bottomed boats, towed by gunboats, each gunboat having a tail of six or eight troop boats. Admiral Hope, in his tender, the 'Coromandel,' led the way, and next to him came our regiment in the post of honour. About thirty-six gunboats, each with its tail of boats crammed with troops, followed, and the glistening bayonets, the varied uniforms, and the excitement on all the faces, made up as spirit-stirring a scene as I ever witnessed.

Gradually the forts began to rise to view, looking like little rocks or islands, before the shore was visible; then we could see the men crowding on the walls, and the guns in the embrasures, and every one was looking out for a flash and puff of smoke; but not a shot was fired, and on went the 'Coromandel,' till well within shot she ran along a muddy spot of land, which was to be the point of disembarkation. Had the Chinese now opened fire, they might have done immense damage, as every shot would have told on our thickly packed masses. . . . During the night some of our staff officers, going a little way into the town, learnt that the fort was evacuated. So all our scientific combinations were wasted. What made them abandon the place is a puzzle to every one; the only reason I can assign is that the

place is too much of a *cul-de-sac* for Chinese, who, like Kaffirs, don't like fighting without a good line of retreat. . . .

The morning after we came in here a force was sent out to reconnoitre. After a time our brigade was advanced and a couple of companies of ours thrown forward to skirmish. We had three hit in our regiment.

The next letter describes the taking of the entrenchments at the head of the causeway near the Peiho forts.

When the second division arrived they found large masses of Tartar cavalry drawn up in front of the entrenchment. Our Armstrong guns were now brought to the front and opened at a range of about two thousand yards. The first few shots fell short and the Tartars advanced boldly upon them. But after a few shots the gunners got the range, and then the terrible effects of the Armstrong gun might be seen. At every shot a regular gap was torn through the line, and horses without riders, men without their horses, could be seen flying from the spot. Still the Tartar cavalry advanced, until within three hundred yards of the guns, when the fire of the infantry staggered them, and they began to waver. Then the Sikh cavalry, almost mad with impatience, was let loose and charged down on them, headed by their officers, who have, and I believe with justice, the reputation of being the best swordsmen and most gallant and dashing horsemen in the army. Major Fane, who commands one regiment, was the first among them, and had cut down three before any of his men were up. In a few minutes the Tartars broke, scattered, and were being pursued for miles across the plain between the entrenchment and Singho.

I saw the Sikh cavalry as they came in after the charge, shaking their lances; and with their picturesque accoutrements, beautiful seat on horseback, and fiery flashing eyes, they certainly were the beau ideal of dashing light horsemen.

In the meantime, our division cleared the town about ten, and had got some two miles along the main causeway when the firing on the right commenced. When within

about a thousand yards of the entrenchment, our battery of Armstrong guns opened fire, and in a few minutes dismounted every gun, and sent the Chinese helter-skelter out of the place. When we came up we found several men lying dead inside the fort, and certainly the wounds inflicted by the Armstrong guns were enough to horrify and intimidate any one. . . .

So ended the first day that the Tartars and our troops were brought into actual contact, and that the Armstrong gun was tried in actual warfare; and it left me with a feeling of pity for the poor Tartars who had to fight against such fearful odds. One thought of how one would behave oneself if opposed to an enemy as superior to us as we are to the Tartars.[3]

On the 14th another move forward was made, upon Tang-ko on the Peiho River, and about two miles in rear of the Taku forts.

At Tang-Ko a number of Chinese documents were found, and among others, it is said, a letter written immediately after our landing, desiring the Commandant to send 'that fat barbarian Elgin' to Pekin immediately.[4]

At last, on the 21st, the Taku forts were taken.

After a very heavy cannonade of two or three hours the stormers, an equal number of English and French, advanced with the scaling ladders. The Chinese for once met us manfully hand to hand, and it was nearly half an hour ere the parapet was escaladed and carried; but once inside the first fort, the Chinese loss was fearful. The only exit was at the very point which we were attacking, and consequently very few of the defenders escaped; some shut themselves up in their casemated barracks and defended themselves till they were bayoneted to a man, and others tried to escape through the embrasures on the sea front towards the next fort, and were shot as they were trying to scramble over their own ditches and defences. Very few men indeed can

[3] Singho, August 17, 1860, to his mother.

[4] August 17, 1860, to his mother.

have escaped, and I do not think their loss in that fort can have been under five hundred actually killed. Our loss was heavy also, considering the insignificance of the fort—nineteen killed outright and 130 wounded, many of them mortally. The French loss was, I believe, about the same. That evening, to the astonishment of every one, the southern fort, of twice the extent and strength of either of the northern ones, was evacuated and quietly taken possession of by the Buffs.

All these forts present a most extraordinary contrast of strength and weakness, science and folly. Alongside of enormous guns, eight and ten inch, beautifully cast in gun metal, and not worth less than 1,000*l.* each, are to be seen bows, cross-bows, and catapults that might have been used at the Siege of Troy. In the same way, with a most defective plan, the forts have been so strengthened and are so massive as to be almost impregnable from the sea. The large southern fort alone mounts 210 guns; of these some, it is true, are things made of bars of iron bound together with hoops, such as Edward III. may have used; but certainly a hundred are guns of the heaviest calibre used —thirty-two, sixty-eight, and eighty pounders. One gun, which is valued at 2,000*l.*, is a perfect specimen of Chinese labour without science. It is of pure copper, beautifully cast, but the metal made of exactly the same thickness all the way from the breech to the muzzle, and even the breech twice as thick as is necessary: the consequence is, about five tons of metal have been used to turn out a gun which will throw a shot about the same weight to a shorter distance than one of our twenty-four pounders requiring about one ton of metal.[5]

After the capture of the Taku forts the allied force remained at Peiho until August 30, and then marched to Tien-tsin. The weather was now very warm, but the country had changed from the brown mud swamps near the coast to a vast garden, 'loaded with splendid peaches, apricots, apples, pears, grapes, &c., besides

[5] Camp on the Peiho, August 24, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

vegetables of all descriptions. You cannot think how pretty the troops looked, forming a long red line, winding through a lane in this rich mass of green trees.'

When Lord Elgin came to Tien-tsin

He was met by two Chinese bigwigs who brought down full powers to treat. After nearly a fortnight's discussion they agreed to every point, and a day was fixed on which to sign the treaty. When the day came the Mandarins quietly told him they had only authority to treat—and not to sign. Lord Elgin, finding he had already been bamboozled out of a fortnight of the fine weather (and we have not much time to spare before the frost sets in), immediately replied that in that case he must come to Pekin and see the Emperor himself, and broke up the conference.[6]

In this letter we get a picture of a Chinese market, almost of greater interest to-day than when it was written :

Here we are living more comfortably and luxuriously than I ever lived before in a camp. There is a most magnificent market established here — splendid grapes, apples, melons and peaches to any amount for next to nothing, eggs four a penny, grapes 2*d.* a pound, peaches from two to ten a penny, ice 4*d.* a hundredweight. We are like a lot of schoolboys eating fruit all day.

No wonder the 'outer' and ill-fed 'barbarian' is to-day hungering after such a land.

Towards the end of September in camp near Tong-chow, seven miles from Pekin, Colley gives an account of the march from Tien-tsin. He was acting as staff-officer to his regiment.

After the hottest march I have ever made, over roads

[6] Tien-tsin, September 9, 1860, to his younger sister.

BRIDGE NEAR TONG-CHOW, SEPTEMBER 21, 1860

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The French infantry reached the bridge while the Tartars were still crossing it

knee-deep in dust, we reached the camp of the main column at Hosinoo, on September 16 after dark, and at three the next morning we were off in fighting order. . . . By and by large numbers of Tartar cavalry appeared in sight, and began moving round us, threatening our baggage. The column was immediately halted and formed up ready for action. . . .

Our regiment was ordered to advance in skirmishing order against a small village occupied by the Tartars. Presently I was ordered with two companies to protect the battery of guns on our left, who were threatened by large masses of cavalry. I was just disposing my two companies to meet the cavalry when, suddenly, Fane and his regiment burst from behind their cover with couched lances. The Tartars seemed inclined for one minute to meet them boldly, but as the leading files crossed they turned panic-struck, and in a second the gallant Sikhs had ridden through and through them, and riderless horses were galloping in all directions. Most of the day I was attached to the guns, and it was killing work for my men, loaded as they were, to keep up with the guns, especially as the ground we had to go over was nearly as bad as the staked ground in front of the Peiho forts. The ground was all cornfields just reaped, and the Chinese in reaping their Indian corn cut each stem separately by a slanting cut, leaving a number of regular stakes, as strong almost as bamboo, standing all over their fields.

On the 21st at daylight in the morning we moved out to attack the Tartar camp around Tong-chow, and, if it should be found necessary, escalade Tong-chow itself. The French force amounted to twelve guns, about one hundred wretchedly mounted cavalry, and 1,300 infantry; our force to 1,900 infantry, 900 cavalry, and eighteen guns.

The country, as usual, is perfectly level, and the corn crops with which it is covered were in the spike state, but it is much prettier than anything we have yet seen, being sprinkled in every direction with clumps of large trees, and large and very handsomely planted cemeteries, most beautiful burying-places, with formal rows of magnificent trees outside, and

inside dark pines and cypress so thick that not a ray of the sun can pierce through. These cemeteries had mostly been used by the Tartars as their camping grounds.[7]

In the same letter there is an account of 'spoiling a Tartar reconnaissance:'

About midday we reached the canal near the bridge of boats shown in the sketch, where we halted and awaited orders, the General having as usual gone skying with the cavalry all over the country. We had been there three hours when some of us, who had gone a little way across the canal to reconnoitre, saw two Tartar officers, apparently great swells, and attended by half a dozen followers on foot, come out of a clump of trees about a thousand yards higher up the canal and reconnoitre us. Thinking we might spoil their reconnaissance, the Colonel and myself got rifles, and, taking three or four men, crept along the canal under cover of the reeds towards them. We had got nearly opposite when, about four hundred yards off and on the opposite side of the canal, we saw several hundred Chinese infantry resting themselves under the trees. Getting under cover of a bit of a bank we let drive a volley at them; hardly had the sound of the last shot died away when there came back such a volley! Matchlocks, jingalls, and even a couple of round shot were all discharged at our unfortunate party, and, as we lay crouching under the bank, a story came to my mind, told, I think, in Napier's memoirs, of an Irish sailor who in some boat attack, when the fire was exceedingly hot, being reproved for ducking by the officer in command, and ordered to hold his head up, answered, 'I will, sir, *when there's room for it.*' I am sure there was not room for ours over the bank for a second or two! However, we returned to the charge, and, being all pretty good shots, had succeeded in making the Tartars take shelter behind the trees when orders were given by the Brigadier for a wing of ours and a wing of the 15th Punjab Native Infantry to cross the canal and drive them out of their position.

[7] September 22, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

Our left wing, to which I belong, was sent. For the first time we came across considerable numbers of Chinese infantry; we drove them out of four camps in succession, and inflicted considerable loss on them. . . .

Tong-chow, it appears, is not to be touched, the Mandarins opening the gates to us immediately, declaring they had no connection with the Tartar soldiery.

Mr. Parkes and the prisoners (including the 'Times' correspondent, another civilian, two English Staff officers, two French ones, and an escort of twenty-five Sikh cavalry) are still in their hands, and nothing is known of their fate.

Pekin, October 8.—Here we are quietly established under the walls of the Imperial city.

Lord Elgin is to enter Pekin, and the treaty is to be signed this afternoon. Sinister rumours of treachery are about, but Lord Elgin takes in a strong escort, and if anything is attempted three guns fired in rapid succession are to be the signal for the army to turn out; if, on the other hand, all goes right, a royal salute of twenty-one guns is to announce to the troops the conclusion of peace.

A few weeks later he gives the story of the British and French prisoners who had fallen into the hands of the Tartar soldiery:

The fate of the prisoners taken on the 18th has at last come out, and a melancholy one it is. With the exception of Mr. Parkes, Mr. Loch, and about four others, they were all cruelly murdered, not in hot blood, but by deliberate and constant torture and illtreatment, such that the strongest constitutions gave way under them—'died of fright,' as the Chinese had the cold-blooded insolence to call it—the term being applied to one of the most dashing officers of the Indian Army, and to men who would have faced and fought their way out through hundredfold odds.[8]

The next letter shows us the Emperor's summer

[8] Pekin, October 16, 1860, to his mother.

palace, the 'garden of perpetual brightness,' as it was called—that wonder of the Eastern world :—

I have just returned from walking along the walls overlooking the city, which perhaps alone in the world is unknown to Europeans, and not made stale by constant description.

The walls of Pekin are about forty feet high, and eighty wide at the base. At the top there is a carriage way at least sixty feet in width. The length round the city is about sixteen miles.

We are due north, occupying one of the gates on the northern face. The gates are about one and a half miles apart, two or three to each face. Each gate is double, with a huge kind of pagoda building over them. Looking from our gate over the city and surrounding country is as magnificent a view as one can well conceive. The city lies on a dead level, which continues unbroken eastwards to the sea. But towards the north, south, and west, this flat is enclosed by an amphitheatre of magnificent rugged snow-covered mountains. Up to the foot of these mountains the country is of the same uniform level, and, being thickly planted with trees, looks almost like a forest. The mountains are very beautiful, the nearer ones showing endless lights and shadows in their gaps and clefts, while over them are seen the more distant snow-capped peaks.

In my last letter I mentioned the prisoners and their sufferings, but I did not speak of the punishment inflicted on the Emperor. In the inquiries instituted it turned out that the Emperor's summer palace, about six miles outside the walls of Pekin, had been the scene of most of their ill-treatment and tortures. This palace had been taken the day we came to Pekin, and the Treasury and principal buildings plundered by the French, who got an immense amount of valuables of all sorts out of it, the General's share alone being estimated at 120,000*l.* We only got about 30,000*l.* or 40,000*l.*, which was distributed the other day, bringing me between 40*l.* and 50*l.* It was now resolved to gut and burn to the ground this palace, and our division was sent out to do it; officers were allowed to take out carts to

carry away anything they could lay hold of. I wish I could have had two or three days to go quietly about the place before it was burnt, for many parts of it were really beautiful, and it grieved me having to burn it down. The palace occupied a space of nearly five miles each way, reaching to the foot of the mountains; it is a perfect labyrinth of wood, artificial rockwork, lakes, pagodas, buildings of all descriptions, with the willow-pattern plate most unmistakable about it all; the same lake, bridge, and building. Near the foot of the mountain there were some small steep knolls, the sides of which were thickly planted with firs and cedars; while on the summits were most beautiful porcelain buildings, and on the highest a magnificent porcelain pagoda of six or seven stories, commanding a view of the country for miles. One building we had to burn was a kind of hunting palace nestled in a nook right in among the mountains. and surrounded by forests full of game.

I have a pretty good collection of silk embroideries and robes (mostly from the imperial wardrobe, and bearing the imperial arms—a golden dragon). Our mess is taking home a magnificent china vase as a reminiscence of the palace. It was presented to them by Colonel Addison, who bought it from a soldier for a mere nothing. The amount of valuable property destroyed must have been something incalculable; china and enamel vases, worth hundreds at home, were knocking about in every direction, too bulky to be carried off; magnificent clocks with musical boxes and all kinds of complicated machinery attached were being kicked about and pulled to pieces by the soldiers, who only cared for things at once valuable and portable, like gold or jewels. The destruction of all these things certainly grieved me, but still it was something to have seen this specimen of Chinese imperial architecture, and the march there and back was uncommonly enjoyable, especially the second day, a cold brisk morning when we marched right out to the genuine wild bleak mountains; and I felt quite a kind of rapture at again putting my foot on a hill.

This proceeding of burning down the palace, though severe, seems to have been salutary, for whereas the Chinese

up to that time had under different pretences avoided surrendering the city, and the impression was generally entertained that it would have to be bombarded and taken by storm, the very day we returned from the palace the gate was given into our hands, and all seems to have run smoothly since, though there are many rumours of intended treachery, and Lord Elgin will not trust himself without a strong guard. Our troops occupy the gate and a space extending up the street for about 200 yards. At that distance a rope has been drawn across the street, beyond which we are not allowed to pass, and behind that rope is a mass of human heads extending back as far as one can see—Chinese, who have thronged from all parts of the city to have a look at the barbarians, and who are content to remain from early morning to dark looking in wonderment at them. The other day one of our bands played in the open space; the crowd remained quite quiet during the playing, but as soon as it was finished burst into roars of laughter!

The winter is setting in in earnest; the other night there were 15 degrees of frost. Luckily, we have lots of opportunities of providing ourselves with furs. I come out of a morning in a gorgeous blue silk dressing-gown, embroidered outside with gold dragons and lined with fur. You would laugh to see us all sitting down to dinner in magnificent embroidered fur coats reaching down to our heels.[9]

Thus ends the last letter written from China. On November 7, the treaty of peace having been ratified by the Emperor, the army broke up and marched to Tien-tsin, where it embarked in gunboats for the fleet. The Chinese War was over. What it was all about has long since been forgotten, and, with the exception of the burning of the Summer Palace, everything in connection with the campaign of 1860 has faded from the world's memory. That, however,

[9] October 23, 1860, to his younger sister.

THE SUMMER PALACE, PEKIN

To face p. 68

still dwells with us, and is likely to do so, taking its place in the annals of those acts of wanton destruction which for fourteen centuries have borne the name of the barbarian race whose king put the final seal upon the degradation of imperial Rome; but Genseric, if Gibbon is to be believed, drew the line of rapine at burning. He promised 'to protect the buildings from *fire*,' writes that historian; and when the Vandal quitted Rome the stately monuments of her power still rose amid the deserted streets.

But perhaps the most curious thing connected with the ruin of the Summer Palace was the personality of its destroyer. It was a singular destiny which decreed that this beautiful product of Eastern civilisation should be ruined by the son of the man who had mutilated the most perfect specimen of Greek art in the Western world, and that the 'Curse of Minerva' which Byron invoked at Athens in 1811 against the plunderer of the Parthenon—

> First on the head of him who did this deed
> My curse shall light on him and all his seed,

should have found, fifty years later, in the fire-ravaged 'garden of perpetual brightness,' and in the minds of millions of Eastern peoples, another

> Branding page and burning line

to hand on the memory of the malediction.

CHAPTER VI

HOME SERVICE

Homeward bound—Detained at the Cape—Staff College—Studies in tactics—Army reform

GEORGE COLLEY left China a captain, but by no means over-fortunate as promotion then went. He had long resolved to enter the Staff College, and the protracted voyage round the Cape seemed to offer opportunity for study which life in Kaffirland and active service in China had hitherto made difficult.

> My name has gone in for the Staff College examinations, which will take place in June next. I mean to brush up my learning during the long and tedious voyage, and have not much fear as to the result.[1]

The ship was the clipper 'Alfred,' 'one of the old Indian sailing ships. The cabins are roomy, the saloon excellent, the table kept on a most liberal footing, and everything as great a contrast as possible to that terrible old "Vulcan."'

So here on board the 'Alfred' he sets to work, reading 'mathematics principally, and finding them far more interesting than novels, or indeed anything but military history.' In other history he has a rare treat, for Froude's volumes, recently published, are on board, and in such demand that only 'random passages' can be read of them.

[1] 'The Alfred,' November 17, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

So far as one can form any opinion of a book from that, I far prefer him to Macaulay. One passage in particular—that description of the change taking place in men's opinions, and how all the old-established tracks of thought were being swept away about the commencement of Henry's reign—is, I think, far above Macaulay. He seems to have Macaulay's love for 'word-painting,' bringing scene after scene vividly before the eye by powerful description and attention to those little details which, while neglected by the general historian, are required to make the scenes *real*; and Froude falls into the same fault—that of impairing the general effect by making these too frequent, and thus overcrowding the mind and rendering the actual historic part very difficult to remember. But there is this essential difference in their descriptions—while Macaulay aims the most at what will bring the scene before the eye, Froude tries to give you a glimpse of the way the actors' minds were working, of the points of view from which the men of those days looked—and the result, at least to me, is that while Macaulay's characters are admirable, they are men who might have lived at any time, whereas Froude's could only have lived at that time.[2]

On February 14 the 'Alfred' reached Table Bay, and the pilot boat brought good news: 'Sir George Grey has just come down from the frontier.' Colley hopes to see him the following day. The Governor's recognition of the work done in Kaffraria might do much towards future promotion:

I look forward to the meeting with some anxiety, as I consider that my prospects in the army mainly depend on it. Somehow I generally missed him when he came up to the frontier, and I only once, I think, had the opportunity of exchanging a dozen words with him; but whether he interests himself in my behalf, or considers that my services were not sufficient to merit such an unusual step, I shall always equally feel I owe him a very heavy debt of gratitude

[2] Capetown, February 19, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

for the delicacy and indulgence with which he encouraged a young and inexperienced hand.

Two days later the interview took place, and the picture of the Governor is so bright and pleasant that it is worth reproducing:

I dined with Sir George last night, and breakfasted again with him this morning. I had before felt the charm of his manner in public, or when meeting him officially, but I could not conceive and I cannot describe that charm when meeting him *en famille*. Instead of, as I had expected, a stiff official dinner, it was the most free, 'home-like' party I have enjoyed since I left England—Sir George, full of the most playful fun, chaffing me about my 'Principality,' and whether I insisted on meeting the Emperor of China as a brother potentate; delighted at any good hit, even at his own expense; throwing off the Governor completely, so that it was often difficult to remember it, but always keeping his position by his clear head and shrewdness. Above all, he seemed delighted when playing with some children who were there, and was evidently an immense favourite with them, for they always came to him in their difficulties.[3]

A few days later the matter was settled. Sir George tells Colley that

he considered Gawler and myself to have been the main props of his frontier policy, and that I had earned a right to anything he could do for me.

In the course of further conversation, he said that he missed me very much on the frontier, that he was about to carry out some measures in my old district, and felt very much the want of any one on the spot in whom he had sufficient confidence.

From such a chief to such a subaltern this was enough. Colley told Sir George Grey that six or eight

[3] Capetown, February 21, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

months must elapse before he could enter the Staff College, and that interval of time he placed at the disposal of the Governor. He had left the old survey of the Bashee unfinished when he had taken over the duties of frontier magistrate. He would go back, ostensibly to complete that survey, and he would then be on the spot to render assistance if required. Sir George gladly accepted the offer, but foresaw difficulties in the way of detaining an officer on his homeward route from China; upon which Colley tells him it is only a whim of his, this remaining at the Cape, and begs Sir George will think no more about it. 'But he laughingly interrupted me, and said it was like offering a starving man a good dinner, and begging him on no account to eat it if it were too much trouble. He said my presence up there would at the present time above all others be most useful to him.' Then we find excuses given to the home circle for this prolonged absence. Here is the determining influence:

It has often struck me that during my service at the Cape I began many things, *but never finished anything.* Thus I began the Pensioners' Village, but as soon as it was well begun I was taken away, and the finishing of it fell to Grantham, with whose name it is consequently connected. I was then for some time employed on a watercourse at Fort Hare, which I intended should have been a grand work, but it was resolved after all not to send the German emigrants there, and it fell to the ground. Then I was employed in various ways about the German Legion; but those I always was of opinion would fail as settlers, consequently I was not sorry to be removed from that. Then I went up to survey the Transkei territory, but long before I had completed that I was withdrawn to take charge in Gawler's place. Finally, I had hoped to remain in charge of that district till all the arrangements for its settlement were completed and I could

hand it over in perfect order to the regular civil authorities; but before one step was taken towards deciding the ultimate fate of the country I was withdrawn, just as the return of Sir George Grey gave some prospect of matters being brought to an end.

Thus, though each change was an advancement, I left the country, after five years' service actively spent, without being able to point to one single work *carried out* by me. And though many might consider it fanciful, I feel that you and John can sympathise with me in my desire not to leave the country without 'leaving my mark' in at least one work begun and executed by me—not liking to remain open to the imputation of having *begun* many things but never completed anything.

The survey of the Transkeian territory is the one which offers itself, but I am not sure whether I may not come in for the completion of another and still more favourite work—viz., the final settlement of that district.

Finally, can you wonder at my preferring such active, thinking, useful life to the idleness of duty in a garrison town in England?[4]

So on February 27, 1861, the Capetown garrison orders contain the following notice: 'At the request of his Excellency the Governor the services of Captain Colley, 2nd "Queen's," are placed at his disposal. That officer will accordingly be detained at the Cape of Good Hope.' Destiny, with singular pertinacity, had in store for this young officer a continuance of the ill fortune alluded to in this letter. Exactly twenty years later to a day Major-General Sir George Colley was to fall by a Boer bullet on the summit of Majuba Hill, his work in South Africa still unfinished.

Now for nine months longer he is back in Kaffraria again. When leaving for China he had doubted

[4] Table Bay, February 25, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

the reality of the regret shown by the Kaffirs at his departure; the welcome they give him makes him ashamed of former disbelief.

The Kaffir police raised by Gawler used to call themselves Gawler's police. But on my taking over charge they dropped his name and assumed mine, 'Ama Polisa Ke Koli.' On my departure, however, they refused to adopt my successor's name, and they still bear no other name but mine.

But what I considered as my greatest triumph was that I actually succeeded in begging an ox out of an old Kaffir chief. Shortly after my arrival I went to his kraal, and told him how I had been engaged in a most serious war—how I had lost all I possessed and was come back poor and a nobody—how when I reached the Cape I bethought me of my old friends up on the frontier, and had come up to see if they really felt for me as they used to profess to, and would help me in my distress; that I came to him first, as one of the oldest servants of Government, to beg a cow, which I should then be able to show in pride to the other chiefs as a present from the great chief Dushani. He listened very attentively, sent for his counsellors, and then told me that I had done right to come to them in my trouble, that their hearts were still with me, and he only wished he had the means of helping me as his heart would desire, but that he had lost a great many cattle during my absence, and had hardly milk enough for his children; he could not, therefore, give me a cow, but he would give me an ox, which was accordingly driven up. However, his funny old face decidedly brightened when I explained to him that it was all chaff on my part, and after a number of pretty speeches ended in giving *him* a present instead.[5]

Another picture of Kaffraria and its people explains a good deal of the fascination attaching to wild life in South Africa:

I have lately been among scenes vividly recalling my first acquaintance with the Transkei district. For some time

[5] Transkei, April 27, 1861, to his younger sister.

I encamped on the very spot where we spent the first night after crossing the Kei in the expedition against Kreli in 1858. It was on a small stream, which immediately below us fell over a sheer rock more than a hundred feet high into a deep and beautiful basin. In the evening (I recollect) our Kaffirs went through a kind of sham fight, the main bodies occupying the slope of two ridges in heavy masses, while their skirmishers were thrown forward in the valley, taking advantage of every bush and stone for cover, and darting from one to the other with a zigzag motion which almost defied the eye to follow them. The main body all the time kept up a low, monotonous, but singularly wild and exciting chant, every now and then breaking forth into a yell of encouragement and applause when any of the skirmishers were supposed to perform any clever or gallant feat. The whole scene in the rapidly growing darkness was one of the wildest and most picturesque you could conceive.[6]

Perhaps from these two extracts we can understand the nature of the feelings that deepen in him as the moment draws near for finally leaving his work on the frontier. These wild men had won their way into his heart, and these beautiful scenes of kloof and water, of mountains and flowering forests, had become woven into the very fibre of his life. In comparison with these civilisation seemed to him tame and vapid. Nevertheless, when his old appointment as Transkeian magistrate was pressed upon him, in the most flattering terms, he refused it. He was not prepared to renounce a military career even for the sake of the prospects open to him in South Africa, and he writes to Colonel Maclean :

The Duke of Cambridge has only authorised my remaining out here for the time necessary to complete the survey

[6] Transkei, August 15, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

of the Transkei; to remain longer would necessitate my leaving my regiment.

The Staff College, for which I am about to be examined, will require my presence in England in February or March at the latest, by which time I calculate on completing the survey.[7]

Notwithstanding this decision, his letters show the reluctance with which he turned from the freshness and the unlimited possibilities of South Africa to the untried English life, which at this time seems only to have presented itself to him in its trivial aspects. His family wonder how he can prefer these savage scenes to the fenced fields and walled roads of civilisation. He answers from 'Camp on the Tora:'

I confess I cannot quite understand how you can continue to wonder at my preferring the life I lead out here to the cultivated life at home—a kind of mental self-nursing, useless, or nearly so, to any one but oneself. Fancy exchanging the position I should be in as frontier magistrate, trusted by my superiors, looked up to by the thousands under me, looked upon by a large part of the colony as the great shield between them and war; every day and every hour of the day compelled to think and act for myself on questions involving great numbers of people, and to cultivate my mind in the true school for mental cultivation—action—fancy, I say, exchanging this by preference for a 'cultivated life,' picking up pretty ideas and perhaps repeating them, making pretty drawings, &c., and feeling oneself of no earthly use to any one. I don't think ambition is the selfish evil passion writers are so fond of making it out to be. For instance, offer to make an ambitious man a king, surrounded by all the pomp and homage and luxury of his rank—but a 'Roi Fainéant'—and how many would you find to take it? There would be plenty of men of small minds and petty vanity ready to grasp it, but none of those usually known as *ambitious*. It is the

[7] August, 1861, to Colonel Maclean.

power *they* would look to, and that not for their own sakes, but for the sake of others. There are, I presume, few such demons as to covet power for the sake of injuring, not benefiting, others.[8]

Here, then, we have his purpose in life—work for the sake of work, ambition for large ideals.

Two months before this last letter was written Colley had gone to Kingwilliamstown for examination for entrance to the Staff College. There were thirteen vacancies and fifty candidates. Writing to his mother he says:

> You must not be disappointed if I do not take my old Cheam and Sandhurst places. It has not been a fair race to me. If, however, I come out badly on *leaving* the College, you *may* feel disappointed! The examination went against me in many ways. Several changes have been introduced on the former arrangements, which, of course, candidates at home would be aware of, but of which I was not, and all these changes were against me.[9]

Subjects which he had not taken up had been unexpectedly substituted for those in which he was a proficient. He had none of the advantages of text-books, coaching, &c., and his extremely active life had rendered any real course of study impossible. Nevertheless, with all these things against him, he passed third on the list of successful candidates, and, quitting the Cape in January 1862, arrived in England at the end of February to enter the Staff College in March, one month after the usual time of entrance. At first he is disappointed at 'the way time is wasted'—the students not separated into classes, but working together irrespective of difference in their attainments.

[8] November 6, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.
[9] Camp on the Isomo, November 29, 1861, to his mother.

By being compelled to attend lectures and studies I am kept from nine till five, and yet do not get through as much work as I could do in three hours by myself.

I find myself a perfect schoolboy again, tied down closely, but without acquiring anything to compensate. So I am thinking of going through the course in one year instead of two; the two years' course will about make one year's good reading, so I shall at least have the satisfaction of not wasting my time.[1]

It is clear that in his own thoughts he somewhat resented the unaccustomed restrictions of a student's life. In the following November, when he was just 26, the final examination began. Though he had been a bare nine months at work, and all the men who competed at the final trial had been two years in the College, Colley passed out first, obtaining a total of 4,274 marks, the largest aggregate number ever before obtained, and more than 500 in excess of the second competitor. Immediately afterwards a brevet majority was given him in recognition of his frontier services in South Africa; the tide of his good fortune was now on the rise.

Upon leaving the College Colley went to learn practical artillery work at Woolwich, with the reputation of having passed the most brilliant staff examination on record. After Woolwich he joined the 10th Hussars at Newbridge, remaining with the cavalry arm for another six months. 'When leaving the cavalry the general in Dublin applied for me as his brigade-major—a compliment which I appreciated, coming from a cavalry man to an infantry officer—but the Horse Guards would not hear of it.'

However, in July 1864, the appointment of

[1] Staff College, April, 1863, to his mother.

brigade-major at Devonport was offered to and accepted by him; this position he held during the five following years. That these were busy years the letters written by him to friends and professional acquaintances bear witness. I find the following account of that period in a short autobiographical summary written for his wife some years later. 'During these five years I did a good deal of travelling and sketching through southern England, and on Dartmoor especially. I spent one winter's leave in Algeria. Another I spent in the south of France, and another going over Napoleon's battlefields in the north along the Seine, and at Chalons and Laon. In '69 I made a sketching tour in Spain, visiting all the cathedrals, as well as the scenes of Wellington's chief battles. In 1867 I was appointed Council Examiner in Military History and Art for Sandhurst, Woolwich, and the Staff College, an appointment which brought me about 100*l.* a year extra, took me to Woolwich and Sandhurst twice in the year, and brought me into contact with the Army Education Department.' In this brief record a whole world of work was embraced.

The Devonport appointment terminated in 1869, and from July of that year Colley spent some months with his regiment at Aldershot and Gosport. While there General Napier, the Director-General of Education, offered him the newly created post of head of the Garrison Instruction in England. 'I accepted it, and had made all arrangements for taking it up at Aldershot, when ——, who had apparently agreed, suddenly vetoed it on the ground that I was too junior.'[2] While Colley was still at Devon-

[2] Summary of his Life.

A BIT OF OLD SPAIN

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port Lord Templetown had been succeeded in the command by Sir Augustus Spencer, and when the latter went to Bombay as Commander-in-Chief in 1869 he offered the military secretaryship there to his former brigade-major; but Colley did not accept, and thus his Indian experience was deferred by seven years. At this period his connection with the work of army education had developed his passion for military history. His mind, too, had kept pace with all the advances which the improvements in modern weapons had rendered necessary in applied tactics. A review (written in 1869 in answer to a request from Captain Brackenbury [3]) of the action fought between the Prussian and Hanoverian forces at Langensalza gives the result of his studies of the Prussian system:

I am always afraid to criticise a battle unless I have carefully studied it on the ground. Still, I don't like to refuse an opinion; and one always gains by discussing these matters—so here goes. You must take my opinions for what they are worth, remembering that I have not been on the ground.

First, then, I entirely agree with the author of the 'Taktische Rückblicke' that Flies, attacking merely with the object of keeping the Hanoverians in position, should have given up all idea of defeating them (having in view their enormous superiority of numbers), and that his first care should have been the formation of a strong reserve (not to be drawn upon on any pretext) to cover the ultimate inevitable retreat.

To make my further remarks intelligible it will be better to give my notions of the Prussian system, because what strikes me most strongly in this battle is that, whereas it is frequently quoted as a failure of the Prussian system, it appears to me that the true Prussian system was departed from in almost every movement.

[3] Now Lieut.-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, K.C.B.

The principles of the perpendicular order, as I understand it, are simple and admirable.

The *advance guard* reconnoitres, opens the battle, spreads out, feels the enemy's position, ascertains the best points of attack, tries to lead the enemy to engage as many troops as possible and so weaken him for the main attack, and (on the principle of engaging as few troops at a time as possible, but getting the greatest amount out of them) often bears the brunt of the fighting and usually suffers heavily. Indeed, the French object that too much is expected of the advance guard.

The *main body* follows at such distance that it can support the advance guard if necessary, but it is not necessarily drawn into its action. It either attacks with its fresh unbroken masses on the point selected and 'searched' by the advance guard, or under cover of the latter's fight moves round and endeavours to take the enemy in flank, in which case the action of the advance guard becomes a feint. (This is what is most usually practised at their *grandes manœuvres*.) It is calculated that if the advance guard is engaged sufficiently deeply this will compel the enemy to engage some of his reserves before you have engaged any of yours.

The *reserve* supports the other two, furnishing any necessary detachments to cover the flanks, &c., but bearing in mind that its primary duty is to decide the attack or cover the retreat (for which purpose a sufficient proportion must always be kept in hand) and that every detachment is an evil if possible to be avoided.

Now compare Flies' action; the advance guard, having occupied Langensalza almost without resistance, is scattered to the four winds; some companies go to the extreme left, some to the right, some occupy the village, *one* goes to the front —was there ever such a dislocation? A perfect *reductio ad absurdum* of the company system. The result is that the advance guard, upon whose action so much depends, is frittered away without having even felt the enemy's true position, and the main body finds itself blindly committed to an attack on an apparently impregnable (and also 'unexplored') position.

The main body also has no unity of action. Part has to perform the duties of the advance guard, part is held back in reserve, and ultimately becomes the last reserve! No weighty sustained attack on a selected point is made, and the greater part is buried in the Badewäldchen.

The reserve is partly also thrown into the Badewäldchen, partly sent to meet an attack which should have been provided for in the main line of battle (for it was made by part of the enemy's front line, not by his reserves), and absolutely none is left to perform the special duties of the reserve.

As these remarks may appear severe and vague I will go more into detail. The advance guard is wiped out at the very opening. What it should have done was to push forward to the mill, spread out, and *feel* the Hanoverian position. Flies would then have been made aware of its actual strength before his main body was committed. He could then either (1) have thrown his main body in a sustained and calculated attack on Maxleben; or (2), seeing the enormous odds against him, engaged partially only, attacking with just sufficient vigour to hold the Hanoverians, and taking care to keep his reserve untouched; or (3) if still determined to try and carry the Hanoverian position he might have moved his main body towards Nägelstedt, leaving the reserve to follow and pick up the advance guard. (This seems to me the only chance of forcing the position, and is a favourite Prussian manœuvre.) Of these three courses I certainly consider the second would have been the best, the third next best, and the first the worst.

The actual handling of the main body is so much a question of *terrain* that I am almost afraid to approach it—not knowing the ground. Still certain points present themselves besides the general jumble already noticed (the main body having partly to do advance guard, partly reserve, while some of the reserve is brought up into it). . . .

The employment of the reserve seems to me equally faulty. I cannot conceive with what object the battalion was thrown into the Badewäldchen, already full of troops, and never, so far as I can make out, menaced with any

severe attack. The move of the remainder to the Erbs B. raises the question, 'Is a general justified in employing his last reserves merely to prolong a struggle?' I think the answer would be '*Certainly not*,' except when there is some definite reason for prolonging it, such as the approach of reinforcements, or of night to cover the retreat. At this time Flies could have had no reasonable hope of success, as he had engaged the whole of his force without any result, while the enemy had still more than a third untouched. It was merely a question of prolonging the struggle; he gained nothing by doing so, and risked utter destruction by engaging his last reserves.

I have put what seem to me the faults on the Prussian side as strongly as possible—of course more strongly than I would in a lecture—because I think this battle has been so wrongly quoted against the perpendicular order, of which I am a strong supporter. I think it will be found that in all minor actions and battles where the armies meet unexpectedly, the armies trained on this system will have a great advantage over those trained on the usual deployed line of battle system.[4]

This letter was written more than a year before the Prussian system of attack had proved its superiority in the war of 1870-71, and when it is remembered how far removed was the military mind of England in the year 1869 from the comprehension of any system of tactics other than those of the Peninsular War and the campaign of 1815, it will be allowed that the man who had thus early caught the principles and objects of modern battle tactics possessed a rare power of insight into questions upon which may depend the existence of nations.

It has not been the least of the services rendered by the Volunteer force to the regular army in England that its higher officers, many of whom were

[4] Gosport, December 21, 1869, to Captain Brackenbury.

prominent politicians as well as active volunteers, were able, from their occasional contact with staff-officers of the army, to bring to the notice of their political chiefs men whose merits, under the routine and reserve of the military service, would otherwise never be known outside the immediate circle of the army. During his service as brigade-major at Devonport Colley was brought into frequent contact with many of the leading Volunteer officers of the west country. Ideas of army reform had already begun to simmer through a variety of detail changes. But the crash in 1870 of the French military system called for immediate efforts towards recasting the entire fabric of army organisation and tactical principle. A want was now felt for trained staff-officers whose minds, emancipated from the traditions of a past no longer possible, were fitted to advise the Parliamentary chiefs of the War Office. In the autumn of 1870 Sir Thomas Dyke Acland brought Major Colley's name to the notice of Lord Northbrook, then Under-Secretary of State for War, and throughout the following winter Colley worked at the War Office in the preparation of the measures for short service, abolition of purchase, and re-organisation of the army.

In an official paper of Colley's, written in October 1870, on the 'Reorganisation of the Army and Militia,' I find the entire scheme of infantry organisation, militia and reserve organisation, recruiting, and appointment of officers laid down, in clearest detail, almost precisely as these departments of army system stand to-day.

The task of reforming any involved and complicated system is more difficult than to create from the

beginning an entirely new organisation. Especially was this the case in the British army. Some of its greatest triumphs had been gained, some of its most stupendous results achieved, by the simple faculty of not knowing when it was beaten. 'Go anywhere you like' was General Pennefather's reply at Inkerman to General Cathcart, when in the middle of the battle that officer, arriving at the head of his division, asked for orders. 'Go anywhere you like; you will find plenty of fighting all round.'

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings with which officers trained in such a splendid school of invincible military ignorance would receive new ideas upon tactical subjects. And deeper still would be their indignant opposition to any project for altering the fundamental principles of an army organisation which in the past had given such splendid results. The strength of the interests arrayed against any innovation upon vested rights and established habits in the army may be judged by the fact that the total breakdown of our military organisation in the Crimea and the example of Prussian successes in the war of 1866 had failed to produce any real change in the manner in which the army was officered, recruited, organised, or drilled. Even to-day, when more than a quarter of a century has gone by, the growls of a still active discontent may be heard amongst us, though the whole world has admitted that only by some system of short service can the military strength of a nation be developed and maintained.

In the summer of 1871 Colley was appointed Professor of Military Administration at the Staff College. He held this post a little more than two years, spending the vacations as usual in visiting

foreign battlefields, to whose portentous list had then recently been added the names of Mars-la-Tour, Gravelotte, and Sedan. But those older scenes of matchless military genius—where the great Captain had engaged the legions of the Czar across the already vanquished body of Prussia—still held the highest place in his interest, and we find him travelling in Russia, in Eastern Prussia, and Poland. walking over and sketching the fields of Eylau and Friedland, as in Italy seven years earlier he had sketched and studied at Arcola and Rivoli.[5]

[5] The article 'Army' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was written by Colley for the edition which appeared in 1875. It may be said to have marked the close of the long period he had given to the study of military history and the principles of war.

CHAPTER VII

ASHANTI

Wolseley's expedition—West African forest—Desertion of carriers—Colley re-organises transport—Fighting at Amoaful, Fommanah, Ordahsu—On to Coomassie—Colley in '74.

THROUGHOUT the British dominions peace had prevailed, almost without break, from 1860 to 1873. And these thirteen years at home had afforded time and means for studying the principles of war, the achievements of others, the history of work in fields of bygone action. In the middle of the latter year war had broken out on the West Coast of Africa—one of those small wars of which our history is so full. Early in 1873 a large Ashanti army crossed the river Prah, the dividing line between the kingdom of Ashanti and the Gold Coast protected tribes, and after some bush fighting, in which the invaders were successful, had reached the coast in the neighbourhood of Elmina. In September of that year Sir Garnet Wolseley and a body of officers, thirty-six in number, left England for the Gold Coast. How one general and thirty-six special service officers were to infuse into the native tribes of the protectorate, already defeated and dispersed by a long series of disasters, that confidence which usually commands victorious result, had not been made clear in the instructions of the Government.

The ultimate object of the expedition was the capture of Coomassie. When Sir Garnet Wolseley landed at Cape Coast Castle on October 2, the prospect was not encouraging. The Ashanti army lay in dense forest, about ten miles distant from Cape Coast Castle, spread out along a curve of some twenty miles from right to left. No position could have been more favourable for attack from Cape Coast. The Ashanti army, estimated at from twenty-five to thirty-five thousand men, could have been annihilated by three thousand reliable troops; but the position alone was there—soldiers, in the true sense of the word, there were none.

Upon realising the exact condition of affairs Sir Garnet Wolseley lost no time in informing the Government and urging the immediate despatch of British troops. The same mail carried the following letter to Colonel Colley:

[Private.]

Just a line to tell you I have asked for a third battalion, in addition to the two which are already under orders. I have again opened the question of how it is to be raised, and have implored that it may be formed as I originally wanted all to be—*i.e.* of six companies, one to be taken from a battalion, the best captain in six battalions to choose his own subaltern and call for 109 volunteers, so that the six companies would number in all 650 men, besides officers.

I have asked that if my proposal is granted, the command of the battalion should be given to you; so you had better see somebody at the Horse Guards that you know well, to see how things go on.

If this is acceded to, select some good captains and brevet-major and urge their appointment. We have had a very successful little affair here on the 14th inst., and the

result has already been very beneficial; the only drawback is losing the services of McNeil, who is, I am sorry to say, very severely wounded. His pain must have been excruciating, but he bore it like a true soldier and made no fuss about it.

I have learnt several lessons from my recent fight, not the least being that a selected officer is worth two sent out in the ordinary way of duty according to the roster.

I hope all this can be managed. I have written privately to H.R.H. on the subject, and it is possible that my arguments may have some weight with him.

Will tell you all about the kit required. I hope to see you here.[1]

This letter reached Colley on November 18; he went at once to the War Office. The volunteer battalion was vetoed, but he was allowed to go out as a special service officer, and place his services at the disposal of Sir Garnet Wolseley. On December 4 he sailed for Cape Coast Castle, and at midnight on the 16th the 'Sarmatian' (an Atlantic liner) anchored off the town. The 'Black Watch,' Sir A. Alison, and about a dozen special service officers were on board.

By the middle of December a remarkable change had taken place in the military situation. The Ashanti army had fallen back from the neighbourhood of the coast, and the three battalions of British infantry asked for in October had reached Cape Coast Castle. But the enemy was then over the Prah; his nearest outposts were at least one hundred miles distant, and before any forward movement could be made along the route of his retreat the road to the Prah had to be completed, transport organised, and supplies collected for the march upon Coomassie.

[1] October 23, 1873, from Sir Garnet Wolseley.

And now came in the peculiar nature of the country through which the line of advance lay, and the equally strange conditions of the human and animal life inhabiting it.

We have spoken of the country as all forest, but that phrase very inadequately describes it. It was forest so dense and lofty that the foliage spreading out two hundred feet above the ground formed a kind of second surface to the world—a canopy of tree top, the effect of which was to produce beneath it a green gloom into which the sun's rays could only penetrate at midday in spots and patches. Between this lofty upper shade and the ground grew a second forest of lesser age and size, through which the immense trunks of the larger and older trees shot up their stems a hundred feet without a branch; while below this secondary growth there grew a tangled mass of soft and twisted evergreen, hanging creeper, and matted tendril, so thick and impenetrable that movement to either side of a track just wide enough for a single person to pass, was impossible.

At intervals through this forest lie the villages or 'crooms' of the inhabitants. There are no animals larger than goats and small sheep; horses, mules, and cattle cannot exist in the climate, and all the carrying has to be done on the heads of men and women. The carriers are of every age; the load, balanced on the head, is steadied by one hand slightly touching it, and the long procession of bearers is seen following in single file the winding pathways which undulate through the forest. Here, then, lay the difficulty of supplying the needs of European troops moving any distance into the

country. To feed even 3,000 men while they marched 150 miles from the sea and back again, and to keep them supplied with munitions of war, meant a body of 9,000 carriers, who would also have to carry their own food, because the country had been entirely denuded by the Ashanti army in the earlier part of the year.

On December 17 Colley landed at Cape Coast and had an interview with the general commanding. Next day, in a letter to his sister, he foreshadowed the work he was to be employed on :

> At present everything is at a standstill from want of transport and supplies. The poor 42nd are to be sent out to sea again to cruise for another fortnight, as they are not yet wanted! As usual in these expeditions, the transport is the great difficulty, and, although a great deal has been done, it is still in a very unsatisfactory state, and I am inclined to think my task will be to take it in hand—not perhaps the pleasantest occupation, but any work that tends to help on the expedition is satisfactory. There are other difficulties, however. The transport is under the Control, and it is contrary to custom for combatant officers to serve under non-combatants. I have, however, expressed my willingness to waive this; and if I do, I don't think any others can object to serve under me. Anything to oil the wheels of the machine! [2]

Next day the diary contains the following brief entry: 'December 19. Saw Sir Garnet. Ordered to undertake transport. Started at 1.30 for Mansu. Reached Dunquah late.'

So here at Mansu, forty miles from Cape Coast, he sets to work to get this huge transport wheel of many-thousand-man power out of the deep rut in

[2] Cape Coast, December 18, 1873.

which it was more fixedly embedding itself every day. On December 25 he is back at Cape Coast again, with plans of organisation, movement, &c. Three days on the road had taught him much. Nominally 'the Control,' as it was called, in one of those strange ebullitions of unreasoned zeal of which the history of our army administration is full, had 8,000 carriers on its books, but for all the 'control' it possessed over half this number they might just as well have been inscribed in Domesday Book. Some of the tribes had deserted in large numbers, others were discontented, there were few officers available to put in charge of sections of the road. It was necessary to have many white men as supervisors. The native kings must be made responsible for the numbers of carriers required and for their continuance at work.

On the 26th Colley is back again at Dunquah. 'I am put in charge of the native tribes,' he writes on that day. For a few days following things seem to promise well, but the end of the year brought collapse. The forward movement of the white troops had now begun; two battalions and part of a third were on the road; the headquarters and the naval brigade had passed Mansu. It was a very critical moment in the expedition. All at once desertion on a scale greater than anything that had yet occurred set in.

A single extract from the military returns of the time will suffice to show the total breakdown of the transport. It is the morning state of the Transport Office at Yancoomassie, Assin, a station about twenty miles south of the Prah.

State showing the number of Transport available at Yancoomassie, Assin, 30th December, 1873.

Tribes	Chiefs	Head Men	Carriers	Deserters
Cape Coast . . .	6	12	120	82
Egimacoos 1st . .	1	7	53	20
Egimacoos 2nd . .	—	—	—	351
Goomoahs . . .	1	4	21	60
Ecomfees . . .	1	—	7	70
—	9	23	201	583

(Signed) W. FOWLER, Capt.,
Commanding Transport.

Surely there has never before been recorded such a roll-call as this—laughable when looked on as the solemn military result of a parade, but of intensely tragic import to the men who then were toiling under climatic conditions so bad that delay, disease, and death were almost synonymous expressions. And yet the 'morning report' from Yancoomassie, Assin, was but a repetition of the roll-calls at all the transport stations along the line of advance—at a moment, too, when more than 8,000 carriers were required to keep the troops then on the road in movement to Coomassie.

These official reports, however, give no idea of the strain which the universal desertion of the tribes at this juncture put upon the officer who but a few days earlier had been given entire charge of tribes and transport. From a private letter written on January 22, we can gather something of that struggle against tremendous odds:

The papers will probably have given you some idea of my ups and downs, and I dare say treated you to a few

remarks about the scientific and theoretical officers who prove failures when put to practical work. But I hope they have not frightened you, as I hear at one time they were in some alarm about me at Cape Coast.

I wrote last from there when I saw my transport all melting round me. What I feared was soon realised. Messenger after messenger came, as fast as they ever did to Job, with bad news from all points. My first reserve deserted *en masse*; then the 600 carriers I had collected as transport for the third European regiment; and, finally, my last reserve went too. Then I had to sit down and write that I could not furnish the transport for the third regiment without stopping the passage of supplies up the road, and so endangering the other regiments; and the whole advance was stopped, and the third regiment re-embarked. To write that letter was the most bitter mortification I can ever remember having endured. I nearly cried as I did it. It seemed so hard to have to spoil such a successful expedition, and that the responsibility of the only failure should fall on me without my having the *chance* of helping it.

Three days of very hard work in the sun, followed by sleepless nights, while I was personally taking measures to prevent desertions, brought me down, and for a few days I was laid up with fever, but I carried on my work all the time. I made my plans for reforming our transports, and started to visit the deserting tribes. The first day I was obliged to walk a few miles, in consequence of the badness of the road, and I was very nearly done for, but the fever was off me; the next day I had gained strength, and before the week was out I was walking twenty miles a day, and had to leave my companions, having knocked them up.

Our week's raid was an interesting and a successful one. We surprised several villages at night, surrounding them, and taking all the inhabitants prisoners (to show them they were not so safe as they fancied by the distance from our line); frightened the chiefs thoroughly, and fined one of the kings, who immediately paid up in a bag of gold dust; and, after seven days' absence, reappeared with all the men of

the tribe so thoroughly organised and so well in hand that I have not had a desertion among them since. Other measures had also been successful; and if my first letter, reporting the failure of the transport, had thrown a gloom over the whole expedition, my next one, reporting that I had transport enough to meet all requirements and carry the troops to Coomassie, was received at headquarters with delight—the greater for its being so unexpected.

I went to the Prah a few days afterwards to see Sir Garnet and make the arrangements for the final advance. My reception was most cordial and flattering, and I know that none of the headquarter staff blame me for the first failure; they know I was put under a crumbling house which nothing could then save.

The transport work has been terribly hard. Out of sixteen officers, seven are down with fever—such fine, hard-working fellows. My only complaint against them is that they won't give in soon enough. Meanwhile, an army of carriers is moving to the front with as perfect regularity as Sir Garnet's soldiers, forming stations in rear, and maintaining the supplies as the troops advance; and if it was thought necessary to occupy Coomassie for some time, or even advance further, I should have no fear of another failure.

Sir Garnet has behaved most kindly throughout, and has certainly not withdrawn his confidence from me; almost each day he increases my powers. First I was in charge of the transport only, then of the tribes in the protectorate as well, and now of the whole line of communication from the army to the sea. It is curious that I should be the first instance, so far as I know, in our army of an appointment—that of 'officer in charge of the communication'—which has long existed in the Prussian army, and of the value and importance of which I had been most strongly impressed, and had lectured upon and urged for our army. But I think you must be sick of me and my transport and soldiering, and want to hear a little more about the country.[3]

[3] Mansu, January 22, 1874, to his sister.

Scattered through other letters written at the time there are many glimpses of the natives, not always to their disadvantage. One evening's march is thus described:

> We started late, and it became pitch dark while we were still eight miles from our journey's end. We lost our way repeatedly and got into swamps, and though we ourselves walked the whole way to relieve our bearers they got tired and discouraged. At last we started the 'Old Hundredth,' as the only music we could think of they were likely to know, and they joined in and got quite jolly over it. The natives are not bad fellows, though not so manly as the Kaffirs; they are generally very honest, and it is a curious thing, with the enormous number of desertions we have had among the carriers, amounting to many thousands, they have always delivered their loads before running away.[4]

The delay caused by the desertion of carriers was of short continuance, and in some respects it even proved of advantage to the expedition. Over the Prah the forest for thirty miles was found deserted by the Ashantis; the native regiments were sent across the river; the Engineers pushed on road-making, and a broad practicable track was made from the Prah to the Adansi Hills, where the true frontier of the old Ashanti kingdom began. When Colley returned from his rapid raid into the Agoonah country, and wrote from Mansu on the night of January 14 that he hoped he had produced a certain salutary effect upon our allies—'but if I should be disappointed I am prepared to follow up with more forcible measures'—the transport problem was solved.

During the ten days following his return from

[4] Cape Coast, January 2, 1874, to his sister.

the Agoonah country Colley worked literally day and night to organise, officer, feed, and move the masses of men now pouring in upon the line at Dunquah and Mansu. On January 19 he was at Prahsu, on the 21st he was back at Mansu, on the 24th he is back again at Prahsu, having travelled all night. On the 25th he is at Accrofoom, at the foot of the Adansi Hills; but there he only rests for supper, and at midnight he crosses the hills, arriving at Fommanah at 3 A.M. At breakfast he sees the general in command, and later on he starts back to the Prah, 'taking stock along the road.' There has been a hitch somewhere. On the 27th the scant diary tells us: 'Travelled all night, knocking up stations as I passed, taking stock; reached Prahsu late.' On the 28th he is back again at Fommanah; thus in ten days he has covered 220 miles, written letters and orders of all kinds, inspected stations, hurried up convoys, and now he is at Fommanah ready for the general advance on Coomassie, which is to take place on the following morning, January 29. He has now ten days' supply for the whole force at Fommanah, and about six days' further supply some ten miles further on the road where the head of the advance is posted.

On the 30th he goes from Detchiasso back across the Adansi Hills again. It was well he made this retrograde march, for the Ashantis, disregarding for the moment any attempt to impede the progress of the troops in front, had suddenly sent a party to waylay the carriers in the rear; and coming across Colley's servant with another native fired at and wounded one of them. That was enough to carry panic along twenty miles of route. He restores

order, recrosses the Adansi Hills, and arrives at the headquarter camp at Insarfu. 'Late; scare among my carriers,' is the concluding entry in the short record of this long day's work.

From the Ashanti village of Insarfu (the headquarters of the British force on the night of January 30) was only a very small step forward to another little croom called Egginassie, where Lord Gifford's scouts had heard on the previous night the hum and drum of a large Ashanti force in the forest to the north; beyond that again lay a more important town called Amoaful, where reports agreed a large army was encamped. It is five-and-twenty years since the battle of Amoaful was fought, and long ago it has been forgotten. Nevertheless, it was a fight remarkable in many ways. On the English side there were 2,217 of all ranks; of the Ashanti side no proper estimate has ever been attempted—there were many thousands. The fight was a tough one, and the pluck and tactical quickness of the Ashantis in their own forests made them no mean foes.

The army advanced in a hollow oblong formation, through which ran the main track from Quarman to Amoaful, while on either side dense bush and forest covered all the ground. Close crowded on that track the army had moved forward at a snail's pace from Quarman to Egginassie; and it was only in the comparatively open ground afforded in the latter village that the long sinuous string of men was able to change its formation into something resembling the hollow oblong already mentioned. In the centre were the Commander-in-Chief and his staff. Egginassie, distant from Amoaful 900 yards in a straight

line, thus formed the base of a flattened wedge or cone thrust forward against the Ashantis, who in turn formed a semicircle or crescent of resistance on every side of the wedge except its base.

Behind this base was Quarman, held by a company of West Indians, and about thirty men of the native regiments. Four miles still further to the rear was Insarfu, another entrenched post, containing the baggage of the fighting force, the reserve ammunition, the food convoys, the field hospitals, an immense number of carriers and baggage people, whose rear extended another three miles along the track to Akankawassie. This was the vulnerable point of the situation. Launch against Insarfu and Akankawassie two columns of Ashanti warriors, and it might be difficult to save the rear of the position. That something of this idea occurred to the Ashanti general is evident, for he did attempt Quarman and Insarfu late in the afternoon; but these attacks were not made in strength, and when they were made the main body of the army had already been broken and put to rout in front of Amoaful.

It was nearly 12 o'clock when the town of Amoaful was carried by the Highlanders. An hour or two later, the flank attacks on Egginassie had ceased; the great crescent in which the Ashantis had concentrated five-sixths of their force had been defeated at all points, and only its shreds and patches remained to fall upon our rear at Quarman and Insarfu, causing nevertheless, as we shall presently see, much disorder and confusion along the communications.

A letter of Colley's describes these final efforts of the Ashantis to attack the rear of the British force.

He had been with the headquarters at Egginassie throughout the fight in the earlier part of the day. He spent the afternoon and night in clearing the remains of the Ashanti army from the road in rear, between Quarman and Insarfu, and in getting a great convoy of baggage and provisions through from the latter place.

After having seen a great part of the convoy started, I pushed on to try and reach the head of the column. I had got within a few hundred yards of the head and about half a mile from Quarman, when suddenly the fire reopened from and round that post more vigorously than ever, and immediately afterwards a volley was fired from the bush into our advanced guard and head of the column. The next moment all the carriers in front of me came sweeping down in the wildest panic, throwing their loads in all directions. I was swept into the bush at first, and had some difficulty in recovering myself. I tried for some time to stem the torrent and force them forward, but the fire in front was heavy and increasing, and I soon found my attempts were useless; the carriers only became wilder in their terror and more anxious to free themselves of their loads.

I then passed the word back to return to Insarfu, but that any carrier coming in without his load was to be stopped; and collecting some of the steadiest men about me I tried to make our retreat as quiet and orderly as possible. Late at night, taking with me a company of the Rifle Brigade, Baker's police, and about 200 carriers, I returned to Quarman, collecting every package we could find on the road. After leaving all the loads we had collected at Quarman I pushed on to Amoaful. The firing at Quarman had ceased before I returned to it, but later at night after I had passed through, the Ashantis again opened fire on it.

It was midnight when Colley reached Amoaful. He had thus been engaged incessantly for eighteen hours. In addition to the long fight at Amoaful, where he had acted as staff-officer, he had in the

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afternoon and night gone back to Quarman, had a fight there, gone further back to Insarfu, got the immense baggage train together, then taken it to within a few hundred yards of Quarman; he was then forced back again to Insarfu, went out again to recover the lost baggage, and finally reached Amoaful at midnight; thus covering at least seventeen miles of track, besides sustaining the enormous exertion involved in all the bush fighting at Quarman, and in forming up a baggage column five miles long at Insarfu. Yet his work did not end at Amoaful. 'Colonel Colley,' writes Captain Brackenbury in his 'Narrative of the Ashanti War,' 'with that boundless energy which he always displayed, started back along the road at a quarter to five in the morning, having arrived at Amoaful at midnight, and spent most of the night in writing.' This astonishing record stands, as far as my experience goes, alone, and when it is remembered that these thirty hours' continuous work was done in the worst climate known to man, the stress of the labour can be better understood. One might have imagined that now he could lie down and rest, but the diary shows this was not the case. In the evening (February 1, the day after Amoaful) 'bad accounts from neighbourhood of Fommanah and Moinsey; convoys fired upon. Started late to see to this. Reached Akankawassie at 3 A.M. Started again at daylight. Found Fommanah attacked; had to fight my way in.'

In a letter written on February 7 from Fommanah, on the homeward march from Coomassie, I find the following reference to this attack of February 2:

The next day bad news from the rear of convoys interrupted and fired upon, took me back all the way to Fommanah. On arrival there I found it closely attacked and had to fight my way in with my escort. On taking command I found the Ashantis attacking all round in considerable force; the position a long straggling village with no defences, and the stores at one end and hospital at the other—very awkward to hold. The attack continued for about four hours, and even after it had ceased, when we sent down a party for water we were received with a volley. Captain North and Captain Duncan, two of my transport officers, were wounded. Also several convalescents, European and West Indian.[5]

Owing to the extent of the village and the smallness of the garrison (140 native troops and West Indians and twenty-four sick soldiers and sailors) the enemy were able to reach the houses in some places and the town was soon in flames; but the entrenched post at the north end of the village was safe, and as soon as Colley had taken command his first care was to pull down the houses nearest to it.

By 1 o'clock the attack had ceased, but the really serious result was that it completely upset the transport operations for the next four days; and these days were the extremely important ones which held within them the occupation of Coomassie. He started again for the front, gathered up every pound of food he could find between Fommanah and Amoaful, and added it to the scanty stock now with the fighting force at that place. So we find in the little diary this entry: 'February 3. Started (from Fommanah) at night with escort, reached Amoaful at five, pushed on to Agemmanu, found headquarters started, overtook them on road to Dah; tedious day's march, checked by constant ambus-

[5] Fommanah, February 7, 1874, to his sister.

cades ; bivouacked on the Dah, night of heavy rain.'

Here, again, we have in these few sentences a wonderful record of work. He had marched, as we have seen, all through the night of the 1st, fought and worked all day at Fommanah on the 2nd, and now he has marched all through the night of the 2nd, and has covered thirty miles by the evening of the 3rd, when he lies down on the soaking bivouac on the Dah river, ready for the fight which is to take place on the following day before Coomassie. In the last four days he has fought at Amoaful, at Quarman, and at Fommanah. He has marched incessantly day and night. If he has slept, then he must have been walking in his sleep.

The little army, now reduced by fight and fever to 1,600 of all ranks, occupied on the night of February 3 a singular position. Communication with its base was interrupted ; Fommanah, the scene of yesterday's fight, was more than thirty miles distant. In the intervening forest only detached posts were held by small bodies of our native troops, and between these posts the enemy could do what they liked in this vast forest, which raised its walls of vegetation to cover them on every side. There was no possibility of getting a convoy of food through to the fighting force for many days, and the forest in front was still full of savages, whose resistance at every step of our advance was as determined and apparently as formidable as it had been at Amoaful four days earlier. But ten miles forward in the forest lay Coomassie, the source and centre of the Ashanti power. On the morning of February 1, the general commanding had made his decision, and from that decision nothing could move

him. It was to leave at Agemmanu, fifteen miles from Coomassie, his weak and sickly men and the heavier portion of his baggage, then forming a small column to push on for Coomassie with four days' food. The capture of the city would alone end the war. The King must either sign the peace or have his capital and palace destroyed. 'The Prah rolls to the sea and does not come back, neither can the white man come to Coomassie.' So ran the favourite proverb of the Ashantis for many generations. 'We can cut our way in,' said the general at the council which assembled on the night following Amoaful, 'and if necessary we will cut our way out again.' There were some at that council who held different views; and looking at the situation from the standpoint of abstract rule and principle of war, they could not be blamed for doing so. But in these things there can be no fixed rule. War is a game of chances in which the result to be achieved must be measured against the risk in achieving it. We may think as we will of the policy of wars such as this Ashanti expedition—wars in countries the climate and conditions of which are so hostile to the existence of the white man, but it is impossible not to see in the execution of the expedition, and particularly in this final movement on Coomassie, with the unknown in front and flanks and the too well known in rear, a brilliant example of the best qualities of military genius, where the commander, rising above the accidents of the moment and the precepts of the past, strikes out for himself his own road to victory.

After a night of incessant rain the force broke up from its wet bivouac on the Ordah river, and advanced against the Ashantis posted in the usual

dense cover midway between the river and the village called Ordahsu. The nature of the attack was different from that tried at Amoaful. This time there were no flank columns, a single advance along the main track, the ranks (well closed up) firing into the bush—in front, and on both sides. Before this storm of bullets no one could remain near the track; the thin wedge sheeted with fire moved on, and the village of Ordahsu was won. This was about 10 A.M. Then took place the movement of the transport column, upon the success of which everything depended. The general, lining the road from the river to the village with the 42nd, passed up the long baggage column from the rear at the river, to the front at Ordahsu. Behind the last transport carrier marched the Naval Brigade, closing 'like an iron shield' the rear of the long line of bearers. This admirably conceived and executed movement really decided the campaign; for the Ashantis, finding that they could not stop the advance in the front, had swung round on both flanks expecting to find an easier enemy in rear. But to no purpose. The carriers of the four days' food for the force were now safe and sound in the village of Ordahsu, the supplies were packed and guarded, and the Naval Brigade with Wood's and Russell's regiments stood between the enemy and their expected prey.

All being now secure at Ordahsu, the word was given to clear the road to Coomassie. On went the Highlanders and Rait's artillery; the men cheered as they advanced, the bagpipes played above the crackling of rifles; the louder roar of the Ashanti muskets and the deep boom of the Houssa gun as it threw case

shot along the forest path were heard; the *débris* of Ashanti defeat lay thickly around—the state stools of chiefs, empty powder kegs, the large coloured umbrellas of the war captains, and here and there the dead bodies of slaves and soldiers. Into and through the little villages which now succeeded one another at short intervals, until the last village before Coomassie was reached. Firing had ceased, flags of truce were coming in, but it was too late to resort to diplomacy within sight of the long-expected goal. At half past five the Highlanders crossed the foul marsh of the Soubang and entered Coomassie. Night was already closing over the gloomy forest and the still gloomier city.

The war against the savage enemy was over, there remained the more fatal enemy of the climate to be fought; and still before the transport commander lay the removal of the sick and wounded, of stores and supplies, along the homeward road.

'Marched early,' he wrote on the 4th; 'fight at Ordahsu; in the afternoon pushed on to Coomassie, reached it just before dark; heavy day's work.' A heavy day's work it had indeed been, nor was there time for rest even here, when the goal of the enterprise was won. On February 5 we read:—'Coomassie: visited palace and collected convoy of wounded, spare carriers, &c. Under escort of Wood's and Russell's regiments reached the Dah. Pushed on myself to Agemmanu—tremendous rains.' But he was glad to get away from that foul and cruel croom; for Coomassie, despite all that had been written about it, was found to be only a larger, a filthier, and far more blood-stained collection of mud

and wattle hovels than any other village in the forest.

I had only a few hours of daylight in Coomassie, and not ten minutes to spare. I ran hurriedly through the King's palace, and the general impression that and everything left on me was of the most horrible charnel-house one could conceive. Drums hung with skulls and smeared with blood, stools clotted with blood as if smeared afresh after each sacrifice, impaled bodies—unbearable stench of human sacrifices and victims in every direction. I never was so glad to get out of a place again.[6]

Thus he wrote from Fommanah on the 7th, while the tired but triumphant troops were filing along on the return march to the sea, and again on the same date:

As regards my work, the fighting has now of course entirely distracted attention from the transport, but I have the intense satisfaction of feeling every day more and more how favourably my work is viewed at headquarters. I feel it in many ways, but especially in the perfect confidence Sir Garnet seems to repose in me; he has hardly ever asked me a question about anything I do, but if I say so-and-so has been done or shall be done acts on it at once. It is curious that while always remaining a combatant officer I should have had such a wide range of military duties to perform—engineering, surveying, educational, and now supply.

And with all the events of the past week still fresh in memory, he thus ended his letter:

I shall be curious to see whether full justice will be done in England to the splendid pluck of Sir Garnet's last advance on Coomassie, when he knew his communications and supplies from the rear to be uncertain, had only five days' food with him, and had already learnt by the battle of the 31st how obstinately the enemy could fight; yet he

[6] Fommanah, February 7, 1874, to his sister.

determined to force his way on, fighting every day if need be, and holding to the golden maxim of never giving an enemy (and a savage enemy especially) breathing time.

Dark as the forest was, there are glimpses of native life scattered through the correspondence full of the grotesque animal humour of the African:

I am afraid one's idea of the majesty 'that doth enshroud a king' is not exalted in this country. At one station on my way down I heard a row in camp during the night, and next morning sent to inquire what it was. A native police corporal of mine, a first-rate fellow, came up and saluted. 'Heard row in Mankassin camp last night, sir. Found King making great noise, gambling with his subjects; very bad form, sir. Gave King great thrashing, sir.' [7]

Even at this distance of time it is satisfactory to know that there was at all events one of the monarchs with us in this Ashanti expedition who received in some degree his due.

An offer of the Governorship of the Gold Coast, '4,000*l.* a year, a large house, steam yacht, a military secretary, aide-de-camp, and brigade-major, and the option of holding it for three months, a year, or the full time, as I thought fit,' had been the last event in Colley's service on the Coast.

I told Sir Garnet that, though ready to risk my health on any professional service, I was not prepared to do so in a service entirely unconnected with my profession. Another reason which I think influenced me somewhat was that I see no prospect of putting affairs there on a satisfactory and permanent footing, except by that personal rule of influence which can only be established by a man residing there many years. And it was quite time for me to be leaving the country. There is a popular theory that all work done in that climate is so much taken out of

[7] Cape Coast, February 26, 1874, to his sister.

you which cannot be replaced there. If a man comes out with a full stock of English health and strength and energy, and nurses it carefully, he may go on for a long time; but if he draws on it largely he will soon exhaust it; and, really, it seems to be quite true. I used to be complimented at headquarters on being made either of iron or whalebone, and astonished myself at the amount of hard physical work I was able to do and keep up; but when I came down to the Prah the whalebone was well nigh gone, and on the way down, a walk of a mile or two used to tire me. I weighed under ten stone, and my legs and arms were the most miserable spindles you could imagine. Nearly everybody was in the same condition. But it is wonderful to see the change a few days of a fresh N.E. breeze have produced already.[8]

He was right. The difficulty that lies in the road to a civilised Central Africa is not the negro nor the fetish, the hideous 'customs,' the cannibalism, or the cruelty. These might all be overcome in time, but—there is no time. Death shuts the master's book before the lesson is half finished.

The men who can recollect Colley in Ashanti are now a small band, for nearly a quarter of a century has since elapsed, and in a few years none of them will remain. But by the latest left of those who watched his work and saw the manner of its accomplishment he will be remembered as the choicest type of British officer—calm, resolute, with energy superabundant, of immense resource, absolutely unsparing of self, and withal so quiet, so modest, never a mishap finding him unprepared, never a moment too preoccupied to bear in mind the needs or rights of others.

I find among the papers dealing with the

[8] 'Manitoban,' March 9, 1874, to his sister.

transport work, then at its utmost tension, one bearing date January 29. It was the day of the general advance. He had only reached Fommanah late the previous evening from a forced march to Prahsu and back, seventy miles in two days; to-morrow, or at latest the day after, is to see the battle of Amoaful; and the subject of this letter is to call attention to the services of two of his transport officers, Lieutenant Gordon and Lieutenant Bolton, 'during the late difficulty consequent on the desertion of the carriers.' No hastily dashed-off letter, but a carefully written account of what they had done, and how. 'From the letters and reports received from these officers, showing the distances travelled and the places actually visited, from independent testimony from other sources, and from the success of their efforts and the number of men sent in by them, I can speak to the zeal and ability displayed in executing the task entrusted to them.'[9]

Letters of this nature are usually sent in at the close of a campaign; but Colley would not wait for that. The next day might bring the battle; his own part in the campaign was more than hazardous; he will leave the names of these two subordinate helpers safe, no matter what may happen.

It was during one of these days that the writer of these pages first saw him. Pale and worn of face, with cheeks hollowed by fever and fatigue, and eyes unusually large and lustrous, but still with every feature and fibre of face and frame betokening an immense reserve of resolution—Colley's aspect would have struck the most casual observer with the sense that he was different from most men. There was on

[9] To the Chief of the Staff.

the coast, acting as correspondent for the 'Times,' a remarkably keen observer of men, an African traveller of no mean distinction, and a writer whose name was then well known in the world of letters—the late Mr. Winwood Reade. This is how that keen and often severe critic of men wrote of Colley and his work:

'Colley was an extraordinary man; he dashed about all over the country, sometimes using persuasive words, sometimes burning a village. In a marvellously short space of time he had carriers in hundreds along the road. When the march to Coomassie commenced he travelled backwards and forwards, bringing up convoys himself, now and then taking part in a battle or a skirmish—his only kind of holiday. Much of this travelling was through parts of Ashanti infested by parties of the enemy. He had very narrow escapes; his servant was shot. As one of his officers said, "he seemed to bear a charmed life." More than once I have heard the remark, "What should we have done without Colley?"'

CHAPTER VIII

SOUTH AFRICA IN 1875

Promotion—Visit to America—With Wolseley to Natal—The Cape Dutch—Mission to the Transvaal—Delagoa Bay—The Boers.

THE spring of 1874 came to Colley as a pleasant reaction to the labours just ended on the Gold Coast. Its greater part was spent among the scenes of his earlier life in Ireland, where rest and native air soon restored the health and strength lost in Ashanti. Reward and promotion had come, too, as rapid results of the service so freely given, and in the 'Ashanti Gazette' of March 31 he was promoted full colonel and made Companion of the Bath. He was thus, at the age of thirty-eight years, well on the road to the highest grades in his profession, while in his regiment he was still only a captain. But almost of more importance than actual army rank was the position he had established in the minds of his professional contemporaries. After the Ashanti War he came to be looked upon by the advanced school of military men as the 'coming man' of the service. He had, in fact, proved in practice the possession of rare qualities of action and endurance not always found associated with the highest theoretic knowledge.

By this time had begun the strong personal friendship between Colley and his chief which lasted

unbroken to the end. 'Sir Garnet was in wild spirits,' he writes soon after the return from the Gold Coast. 'He is such a good fellow. I know you are not very favourable to the army, but I think if you knew him you would relent!'[1] And the same note of affection for Sir Garnet frequently recurs in his correspondence.

In the summer of 1874 Colley visited America, and made an extensive tour in the United States. He travelled north and south, visited most of the battlefields of the Potomac, went to California and Canada, and was received everywhere with that open-hearted hospitality always characteristic of America, but which was never more boundless than in the decade following the Civil War. His letters and diaries during his four months' sojourn in America contain many graphic bits illustrative of the transition period following the war. Being well provided with introductions, he had access to nearly all the prominent persons in the Northern and Southern armies. He met Sheridan, Hood, Longstreet, McDowell, Wady Hampton, McCook, and many others. Times had changed with the Southern commanders:

> Such curious positions as one found these great warriors in. A wizened-looking old clerk, whom I saw in an office, was Jeff Thompson, after Morgan almost the most distinguished guerilla leader in the South. Hood is in business here; Beauregard is a commission agent; Jeff Davis is something similar; and General Taylor is agent for a sewing machine! I dine with General Hood to-morrow—a tall handsome-looking soldier and gentleman, with a fine head, a deep and clear eye, and a very pleasant and courteous smile; but terribly shattered, having lost a leg and the use of one hand, besides other wounds.[2]

[1] Ferney, May 24, 1874, to Miss Hamilton.

[2] New Orleans, October 28, 1874, to his sister.

In another letter we read of 'a Colonel McCook, who, with his father and eight brothers, volunteered and fought on the Northern side, all distinguishing themselves, and all rising to high commands, the father and five brothers being killed. He is now in good practice as a lawyer.' So the vicissitudes of fortune were not all on the side of the South. In a letter already quoted we find an instance of the good sense and generosity with which North and South, victors and vanquished, settled down to peaceful life after the war:

> I have been pleased to find that among the best of the army officers there seems to be a very friendly feeling towards their old opponents. I was walking to-day with a nice young cavalry officer, A.D.C. to the General, and nearly all the men he stopped to speak to and introduce me to were Confederate officers.[3]

Returning to England at the close of 1874, Colley rejoined his regiment in Dublin. He was still only a captain in the 'Queen's,' and thus there was seen about this time the almost unprecedented incident of a full colonel in the army performing the ordinary duty of orderly officer of the day in barracks, on the same roster or duty list as the subalterns of the regiment.

On February 16 he was at this work in Ship Street Barracks when a telegram reached him from Sir Garnet Wolseley asking him to come immediately to London and to be ready to go abroad at an early date. He reached London the next morning, and at the War Office heard the particulars of the service required. He was to start

[3] New Orleans, October 28, 1874, to his sister.

in a few days for Natal, whither Sir Garnet Wolseley, with a small staff, was about to proceed on a special political mission as Governor of Natal and High Commissioner in South-Eastern Africa. On March 20 they reached Table Bay. H.M.S. 'Raleigh,' Captain Tryon in command, was detached from the Flying Squadron at Simon's Bay and placed at the disposal of Sir Garnet Wolseley for his further voyage to Natal. On the 28th the 'Raleigh' was off the coast of Kaffraria, the weather calm and fine, the whole range of the Amatolas being in view over the green hills of Kaffirland. The shore was but a few miles distant, and the eye could easily distinguish the mouths of the different rivers and the chief features of the landscape—the mountain called Macomo's den, the hill that marked the Yellow Wood Drift, and the rock frontlet of Keishama's Hoek rising clear over the strip of yellow shore. Twenty years had gone by since Colley had made his first essay in the business of active command amid these hills and kloofs. 'It seemed so strange,' he wrote, 'to see the Amatola Mountains and all my old haunts again.'

In an earlier chapter mention has been made of the circumstances under which we had acknowledged the right of the Boers to govern themselves in the regions north of the Orange and Vaal Rivers. The previous history of these Dutch colonists, whose national development was destined to play such an important part in the life of the subject of this memoir, may now be sketched.

More than two hundred years ago, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, some 150 Huguenots and their families selected the Dutch settlements

in South Africa for their future home. Many of them bore names such as Joubert, Jourdain, Bertrand, which a century later were to figure in that long roll of marshals and generals of France which Bonaparte and the Revolution gave to fame. These Huguenots intermarried among the Dutch, and the all-conquering mother tongue had its inevitable triumph. Nevertheless, they made an indelible mark upon the community in which they established themselves, and in their settlements on the Berg River such names as Rochelle, Normandy, Languedoc still recall the homes from which they came. From the first the settlers, Dutch and French, chafed against the rule of the Dutch East India Company. Many among them early trekked into remoter districts, until within ninety years of the time of their arrival in South Africa they had spread to the Orange River on the north and the Great Fish River on the east, more than 500 miles from the parent colony at Capetown.

The history and surroundings of these pioneers of the wilderness could not fail to continue instincts of liberty in the mind of succeeding generations. Literature save the Bible they had none, but that book they knew by heart, and thus, as they wandered deeper into these vast plains and rugged mountains, there gradually grew up in South Africa the people whom to-day we call Boers—a homely, stolid, manly race, full of faith in Providence, but trusting also to 'roer' gun and stout arm to meet and beat whatever odds might be against them.

It was not for some time after the second conquest of the Cape in 1806 that the English officials and the Dutch of the interior came into contact.

In 1815, however, during the government of Lord Charles Somerset, trouble arose between them in the extreme east of the colony upon certain rights guaranteed to the Dutch settlers by the Convention of 1806. This first outbreak of discontent was easily suppressed, but not without tragic occurrences, which marked it as the source of a long series of political troubles. The next twenty years were full of grievance and disturbance, and ultimately, in 1835, 'a swarm of Boers, many thousands strong, packed their goods into waggons, gathered their flocks and herds around them, and struck off for the unknown wilderness to the north of the Orange River.'[4] At first we refused to recognise the independence of these emigrant Boers; we pursued them and fought them; but at last, in 1854, as already related, we resolved to leave them in undisturbed possession of the country lying north of the Orange River.

After this acknowledgment all had run smoothly for a time; and the fifteen years since Colley had quitted the country had been singularly uneventful in war. The Dutch farmers devoted themselves to pastoral and semi-nomadic life, the inhabitants of the small villages that sprang up to minister to the wants of the scattered burghers were partly of Dutch and partly of English origin, and in the peaceful exchange and barter of a life so far removed from contact with the outer world the animosities of race were gradually disappearing; while those slow and silent growths which do more for nations than their most fevered efforts had worked unlooked-for developments. Happy would it have been for South Africa if

[4] Froude.

nothing had occurred to break in upon that state of pastoral semi-isolation and introduce new forms of race antagonism. But now the Greek saying that Africa always brought forth something new was again about to find its verification.

About the year 1871 diamonds were discovered south of the Vaal River on ground then within the area of the Orange Free State. In less than a year from the date of the discovery, the territory on which the mines were situated was declared British. The Government of the Orange Free State vehemently protested, the articles of the Convention of 1854 had been violated, they said. But no notice was taken, and the colony of Griqualand West, with its new capital town of Kimberley, became incorporated into the British Empire. Although the Boers did not appeal to arms, contenting themselves with protest against the seizure, they laid the lesson to heart, and all the old slumbering feelings of discontent and suspicion awoke again among them. Nor did the Diamond Fields, as they were called, prove a source of unmitigated advantage to the English Government. A danger soon arose directly traceable to the new possession. The working of the mines brought together vast numbers of natives, who were paid by their masters in guns and ammunition. To possess the arm which he has ever identified with the success of his enemy against himself has always been the strongest inducement to the black man to try again the fortune of war with his white conqueror. At the date we have arrived at, March 1875, an outbreak had recently occurred in a Zulu tribe (living within the borders of Natal), whose chief Langalabalele refused to register the guns

his people had obtained in payment for their labour in the diamond mines. The authority of the English Government had been soon re-established, but this disturbance was followed by repressive measures on the part of the Natal Government which were considered by Lord Carnarvon, the Colonial Minister, to be opposed to English law. A radical change was required, he thought, in the constitution of Natal under which such breaches of legal form had taken place. The Governor was recalled, and Sir Garnet Wolseley sent out in his stead. The whole system under which the natives were governed was to be overhauled; all matters of administration, taxation, and relations with the Dutch Republic were to be examined and reported on; and certain organic changes introduced into the constitution of Natal.

This, then, was the object of the sudden telegram of February 16 and the subsequent voyage to the Cape. Colonel Colley was the senior officer of the four selected by Sir Garnet Wolseley to assist him in this special mission; he was the only one who had had previous acquaintance with that part of the Empire. 'My position is charmingly vague,' he wrote on arrival at Cape Town. 'I only know I am to take Sir Garnet's place in case of any accident and to have a command in case of military operations, and meantime make myself generally useful. As far as I can see there is no chance of military operations, and our mission is a purely civil one.' Then he explains its scope and object, the chief point being to induce the Legislative Council

to pass a Bill with a good grace tying their own hands, either by altering the constitution of the Council to one consisting of an equal number of nominated and elected

members, or by giving the Crown control over all the taxes raised directly from the natives, now amounting to about one-third of the whole revenue.

It is not a pleasant kind of work, and I think Sir Garnet would have been glad to have kept out of it, only he was asked in a way that made it impossible for a public servant to refuse.[5]

Landing at Durban on March 30, the party proceeded to Maritzburg, and were soon comfortably settled in Government House (five years later to become Colley's home) and at work upon their novel duties. He writes a week later:

Give me a soldier's life for variety! My present duties are:

1. Superintend construction of a lawn tennis ground in our garden.

2. Relieve the General of military details and correspondence, not onerous, as the whole garrison is not as strong as one regiment.

3. Treasurer and Paymaster-General of the Colony; preparing estimates and budget for Council.

4. Postmaster-General of the Colony.

5. Superintend invitations for balls, &c.

6. Write the *menus* for our dinner parties every evening, as I am credited with writing the neatest hand.

Whether Sir Garnet is successful in his mission or not, it certainly will have been to us a most amusing as well as a most interesting trip. We all live together in this nice little house, work hard most of the day, and about 4 or 5 o'clock turn out to lawn tennis or go out for a walk or a ride; then a dinner party, and lastly an hour's chaff and discussion before going to bed.[6]

As for Sir Garnet, I feel that if I work long with him I shall lose all calm judgment of his character and abilities in their fascination. Nothing ever seems to put him out: work, play, difficulties, annoyances, all seem to be the same

[5] March 18, 1875.

[6] Maritzburg, April 8, 1875, to his sister.

fun that a good run is to a hunting man. It is enough to make one feel twenty years younger to hear him, after working hard from perhaps six in the morning till five in the afternoon, run upstairs three steps at a time, singing like a schoolboy, and turn us all out for a game of tennis or a gallop.

The climate is simply perfection: bright warm days and cool nights, with fresh mornings that make one jump out of bed and just thank God for living. Then there is the luxury—to me, perhaps, the highest of all—of working hard with men who are all equally eager, working in perfect harmony for the general aim and not for themselves, and equally devoted to their chief. At the Gold Coast I had that luxury, but then it was clouded by the constant illness of those around me, and the knowledge that their very 'gameness' was doing them harm. Here every one is in perfect health and spirits.[7]

Thus ran in pleasant contrast of work and amusement the month of April until the time came for the much-talked-of meeting of the Legislative Council. It met early in May—the discussion upon the Bill began at once. The picture we get of this colonial assembly is by no means an unfavourable one.

I confess I am agreeably surprised at the tone of the debates. Though not a business-like assembly, there are some able men and good speakers among them, and Major Butler says they compare favourably with the representatives of very much larger colonies—such, for instance, as Canada. One of the most telling speakers I have heard is an old Dutchman named Boshoff. He was for many years President of the Orange Free State, and is commonly known as Hangman Boshoff, because of an Englishman whom he had hanged on his own responsibility after the jury had failed to agree at the trial. A very resolute-looking old gentleman and a nervous (in the strong sense) and impressive speaker.[8]

[7] Maritzburg, April 19, 1875. [8] Maritzburg, May 16, 1875.

The second reading took place on May 20. All the Government members had spoken except Colley. It had been arranged that he should be the last speaker, for his unremitting attention to public business, and the improvements he had already introduced into the postal arrangements of the colony, as well as the thorough manner in which he had mastered all the details of the public revenue and of taxation, had impressed even the extreme opponents of the Government with a sense of his high character and mental power. The history of this night's debate is best told in his own words, and we give it because it illustrates his characteristic truthfulness and complete subordination of self to anything he believed to be the line of duty to his chief or to the State.

Pride comes before the fall! We had our debate on the second reading of the Bill. The debate was carried on with an ability and good taste I was hardly prepared for. I was put up nearly at the close of the debate to make what I suppose was intended to be *the* speech on our side, and after stammering a few sentences broke down so completely that I had to sit down. So much for taking up a line that one was never cut out for.

However, we carried the second reading, and I am not sure that any amount of talking would have made any difference beyond perhaps reducing the small majority we had; and it is Sir Garnet's success, not mine, that I care for in this matter. If they would only have made me angry I think I could have spoken, but they were so courteous to us personally, and the one usually most violent alluded to Major B. and myself as 'two distinguished officers whose presence had lent a dignity to these debates that they had never before known, and which they could only regret was likely to be of such short duration.' I don't mean to be beat if I can help it, and if there is another fight on the

third reading, as we anticipate, will have another try; but I wish I was acting, and had done with talking. Meanwhile the only thing I can get comfort from is my post office, where there *is* something to be done occasionally.[9]

At last the Bill was carried, by a very narrow majority, and after considerable modifications in committee. 'I am too glad to have it passed on those terms,' wrote Colley, 'for the one thing to be avoided was to oblige Lord Carnarvon to go to the Imperial Parliament for compulsory legislation.' And now he turns to other and perhaps more congenial work:

I start in a few days for the Transvaal, on a mission to the President of that Republic, thence to the gold fields, and, if I can manage it, back by Delagoa Bay. There is, however, a belt of country between the mountains and Delagoa Bay, which, owing partly to the tsetse fly, and partly to its extraordinary unhealthiness, seems to defeat most efforts to cross it. I calculate on being away about a month on this trip. Meanwhile Sir Garnet is not a man to let one weary of idleness, and I am on committees for putting nearly everything in the colony—its finances, its public offices, its magistracy—to rights.

I have also before me an inquiry into some charges, made by Bishop Colenso, against one of the principal magistrates here; and if the bishop is as pertinacious and argumentative in his attacks on the magistrate as he is in his attacks on Moses, it will not be a light task. I feel rather sad at parting from our very pleasant party; no work ever seemed too heavy or wearisome when one had those merry dinners and pleasant evenings to look forward to.

Just at present the Boers of the Transvaal have sent out a large commando against the Zulus, and my movements will probably be watched with very suspicious eyes. One object of my mission is to try and get them to cede to us a

[9] Maritzburg, May 27, 1875, to his sister.

disputed tract of land lying between them and the Zulus, and which is the cause of constant quarrels between the two. I hardly expect, however, to succeed in this, and perhaps may not even broach it.[1]

In addition to conferring with the President of the South African Republic upon postal and telegraphic questions, Colley was confidentially required to examine the relations between the Boers and their native subjects, and the sentiments of the Boers themselves in relation to England and to confederation with Natal. He was also to report upon their resources and their methods of 'commando' warfare; upon the relative proportions of Dutch, English, and natives; upon the influence of the English colonists, and whether it was likely to exercise a determining weight upon the conduct of public affairs; upon the railway projected between the Transvaal and Delagoa Bay; in fact, upon almost every subject connected with the country and the people.

On June 17, Colley, accompanied by one officer, started for the Transvaal, his journey being apparently of ordinary tourist interest. On the morning of the 20th he left Newcastle, following the road over the Ingogo River, and by the foot of Majuba Mountain to Lang's Nek—a road destined to become memorable just five and a half years later, but now lying in the silence and solitude of a land from which the Kaffir had almost disappeared, and to which the white man had only sparsely come. I find these few miles of road leading from Natal to the Transvaal thus briefly noticed in the diary of the day: '20th, Sunday. Left Newcastle 7.15, crossed Buffalo about 9.45; fair road; longish hill up from

[1] Maritzburg, June 13, 1875.

Newcastle. Afterwards some good flat ridges.' The 'longish hill' was to Lang's Nek, and on one of the 'flat ridges' at the foot of the Majuba Mountain is the grave of General Colley to-day.

Reaching Wakkerstroom on the afternoon of the 20th, Colley heard that the Dutch 'commando' had started on its road to the Amaswazi country; learning also that the acting President of the Republic was absent from Pretoria, he changed his route, determined to try and overtake the commando, then push on for Delagoa Bay and return *via* the gold fields to Pretoria. An account of this trip subsequently written gives so many interesting glimpses of Dutch and native life, and of the country through which the route to Delagoa Bay lay, that I give a great deal of it.

Secured the only places in the gold fields' mail cart. Had a very good dinner at the inn kept by Jan Montine, who described himself as the best hunter in South Africa, and gave most cheering accounts of our journey to Delagoa Bay—could walk it easily in six days, unless the immense quantities of game we should see actually jostled us out of the road. For all his good news and encouragement he duly charged in his bill—and I fear he lies.

Started at dusk in a tumbledown cart, with one spring broken, and a very drunken Hottentot driver; the contractor informing us confidentially as we started that though the boy was very drunk he thought he could find his way. Smith, who is an old driver, was put into the front seat with him to keep him straight. He was proud of his knowledge of the country, and to show it would every now and then take a wide sweep across country in the pitch darkness—nominally to avoid a bad bit in the road, but really to show how he could hit the road off again; occasionally we got into difficulties, and twice had all to get down, and, up to our knees in water, to pull the cart out of bogs. Providentially

the second time one of the horses knocked him down and danced on him, and after that he was a shade sobered. . . .

From Bushman's we began to see game in considerable quantities, groups of antelope of different kinds. I shot a koran. When we got to a series of large ponds called the New Scotland pans the game exceeded anything I had ever seen; in one basin, little over half a mile square, there were at least a thousand head blesbok, springboks, wildebeests, &c., wheeling, galloping, careering, and throwing up clouds of dust, like some great cavalry field day—really a magnificent sight. Baker had a few shots, but without success. Sometimes a great herd would come cantering across the road ahead of us; then, as they found the post cart coming up to them, they would quicken their pace to get across before it, till the column would tail out, the pace grow quicker and quicker, and the last pass only a few yards from our horses' heads at a mad tearing gallop. From this to Clarke's, which we reached about sunset, the whole road was lined with herds of game, and the ponds covered with wild fowl. Passed Lake Christie, a considerable sheet of water about ten miles long by one to two across. Clarke's, a trading station, was the terminus of our post cart travelling—the post cart (a weekly one) runs on to Leydenberg and the gold fields, distant about 120 miles, but our plan is to turn off at Clarke's and strike across country for Delagoa Bay.

June 22.—Heard unwelcome news that Mr. Bell (to whom we had been recommended as the best person to provide us with guides) was away with commando, and would not be back for a week. Determined, however, to push on with or without guides and carriers, and follow the track of the commando if necessary. Clarke, a regular Job's comforter, laughed at the idea of our starting on such an expedition without waggons or equipment, without guides or interpreter; said we should find the distance 230 miles instead of 150, no game on the road, and the Kaffirs all too much frightened by the commando to supply us with food or carriers. . . .

At Hamilton (Mr. Bell's) heard that the commando had assembled there as rendezvous—about 320 burghers

with four guns and sixty-five waggons—and after waiting there a few days to concentrate had marched off three days before for the Umswazi king's kraal to confirm the present king, who has only just succeeded. A good dinner and beds, and made the most of them, thinking they were likely to be our last civilised ones for some time to come.

June 23.—A hard white frost—bad look-out for sleeping out. Mrs. Bell kindly provided two of her servants to carry for us till we overtook Mr. Bell. Reduced our kit to two moderate bundles, principally blankets; wrote to Leydenberg and gold fields to secure seats in the post cart of July 12—to the great amusement of Clarke and Mrs. Bell, who have much doubt of our ever reaching Delagoa, and utterly disbelieve our returning within the time. Walked about twelve miles; halted for a rest by a stream, and were passed by a waggon going to Hamilton and carrying a sick man down with Delagoa Bay fever. The owner of the waggon, a magnificent burly Scotchman, stopped to have a chat with us and asked where our waggon was. When he learnt we meant to walk, he took off his hat and scratched his head for some minutes before he could speak again. When we asked why we shouldn't, he could only answer, 'But ye're nae fit for it,' which amused us, as Baker is at least six feet two and very powerfully built. However, he told us how many had been ruined by the fever and died, and asked us to take a look at his patient, who was once as fine a man as Baker. Were overtaken by a waggon going our road, so took a lift for six miles to Henderson's, the last European habitation on our line. . . . At 10.30, when the moon was up, pushed on again ten miles along a rather wild and rocky valley to the drift we had selected for our halting place, and slept under a rock there.

June 24.—Found a trader's cart at the drift going the same direction as ourselves, the driver a nice intelligent young Scotchman called Gifford. Started early and made twenty miles walking, with occasional lifts in the cart. Reached Buchanan's waggon at the Hiambanzati. Made a frugal breakfast off tea, a very small bit of bread, and a partridge between four; afterwards started with our

guns in search of game, but without success; the passage of the commando seems to have frightened all away. In the evening we all dined together at Buchanan's waggon, but as both he and Gifford seemed short of meat, we modestly declined any share in a most inviting-looking piece of cold beef. I don't know what our faces showed, but I know what our feelings were, when, after dinner, Gifford began to cut off delicious hunks of meat that we would gladly have given ten shillings apiece for, and chucked them to his dog!

June 25.—After about ten miles sighted the waggons of the commando—a very pretty sight as the train, quite two miles long, wound slowly up the zigzag ascent of Buffel's Hill. . . . After about fifteen miles of rough walking, much through grass above one's head, and wading a river about 100 yards broad, reached the king's kraal an hour after dark. In a regular beehive hut, stifling hot and reeking with smoke, we found Mr. Bell, Rudolph, and the leaders of the commando collected, drinking native beer. Tired as we were with our twenty-nine miles, we could not stand the atmosphere of the hut, and rolled ourselves up in our blankets outside.

June 26.—From an early hour the Amaswazi warriors began collecting at the kraal. They came in in companies of from forty to eighty strong, formed in two ranks, with about three paces between the ranks, keeping excellent line and time, and wheeling and manœuvring very prettily; generally they moved at a springy run, the captain in front, and before him again one man, 'the buffalo,' bounding, shouting, singing, and going through all kinds of antics, the rest accompanying his movements with a war song, or sometimes an alternate hum and hiss, which, coming with admirable precision from a number of voices, has a most striking effect. The men were curiously bedizened and covered with skins, feathers, and ornaments of all sorts. As a rule, they had hanging from their waists all round, a mass of small skins —tiger cat, wild cat, monkey, &c.—enough to furnish a furrier's shop; a tiger skin over the shoulders, on the head a mass of ostrich feathers, mixed with cocks' feathers, rising in two heavy plumes, and then falling in a hanging mass

halfway down the back; brass ornaments and bands of skin round their wrists, elbows, knees, and ankles; the oval shield of black and white ox hide, with a bundle of assegais in the left hand, and usually a wand, with bits of skins, animal tails, or bunches of feathers tied to it, carried upright in the right hand, and waving like so many lance-heads or flags over them. The effect of a long line, all with the handsome tiger skins trailing down their backs, and the masses of black waving plumes, was sometimes very fine, and not at all unlike that of a Highland regiment in full dress.

As the companies came in they collected in regiments, and were formed up one at a time in the large enclosure for inspection. At the upper end sat a number of the principal chiefs and councillors, squatting Kaffir fashion on the ground, with the old warriors continuing the circle on each side. Behind the chiefs were the lads of the king's regiment, all of the same age as the king, who only turn out when he does himself, and seem to have something of the privileges of Eton boys. Behind them, again, a thick background of spectators, men whose regiments were not undergoing inspection, and women. Across the lower end of the enclosure the regiment was drawn up in line, singing a war song. Presently a man would bound out of the line, go through a sort of war dance, killing imaginary enemies, and relating the deeds of himself and his company, while the war song would rise and fall in unison with his movements; after passing up and down the line, he would make the tour of the circle, sometimes creeping as if stalking an enemy, sometimes in a series of wonderful bounds; and, drawing up before the inspecting chief, tell him how many men he had killed, and beg to be led again against the Basutos or some other enemy. Our friends the Eton boys were very free in their criticisms; sometimes they applauded and joined in the war song, but if the performer was awkward, or was not believed in, the chaff was furious, and sometimes very good. Occasionally the feelings of one of the old men would get the better of him, and he would get up and go round the circle, making a feeble attempt with his wizened limbs to imitate the bounds and gesticulations of the others, and

relating all he had done in his day. When this had gone on for a quarter of an hour or so, the commander of the regiment would receive orders to bring up his men by companies; each company would advance to where the chiefs sat, receive a few words from them, then wheel off with a very pretty and rapid wheel, and rush out through the narrow entrance with a charge and shout. After that they would remain outside, break into companies, and execute little private war dances and imitation fights. This went on nearly all day; the king himself did not appear; he was to wait till the Dutch commando was all assembled.

In the afternoon the Dutch began to come in, and form their camp on the other side of the stream, about a mile away; and Bell, Rudolph, and the rest of us moved off to join them. The train was long, and took nearly two hours coming, each field cornet at the head of his ten or twenty men, followed by his waggons; the camp was pitched in the regular 'laager' fashion in which the Dutch have so often resisted the Kaffir attacks—the waggons in a circle, touching each other, and forming a large enclosure, within which the cattle and horses were driven at night. In olden times each waggon carried a bit of palisading (stakes secured together by cord), which was put up between the wheels, and made a complete barrier.

The commando were altogether a rough-looking lot (about one-half Englishmen and mixed nationalities, the rest regular Dutch Boers), difficult to manage, but formidable against any Kaffir army, every man being well mounted, well armed, trained all his life to roughing it and shooting game, and with a strong sense of superiority over his adversary. The organisation is simple in the extreme. Every field cornet of a district receives orders to attend at a certain place and time with so many men, provided with waggons and supplies for so many days. He selects the men—unmarried men, between twenty and thirty, being taken first—and those who have not to serve personally are called on to furnish the material; one man provides a waggon and span of oxen, another so many slaughter cattle, another so many pounds of sugar, coffee, flour, according

to their several means. When they meet, the field cornets assemble and elect their commandant. The principal characters of our commando were: first, Mr. Rudolph, for nearly twenty years an official in Natal, then offered the post of Landdrost of Utrecht by the Transvaal Government, with higher pay, and a sort of understood position of manager of native affairs for that Government. He was the political leader, decided where the commando should go, and carried on all the palaver, but had not to do with the discipline; an intelligent man, very fair judging, but in rather a difficult position, as the Dutch mistrusted him on account of his English proclivities and training, while the English contingent complained that he favoured the Dutch. Associated with him was the Commandant-General of the commando, a regular old Dutch Boer, who had emigrated in the early days from British rule, fought in the old wars of Dingaan and when Retief and his sixty companions were all slaughtered, and emigrated again from Natal when the British assumed sovereignty. Then there was a 'member of the Executive Council,' a sort of commissioner, such as the Dutch Republics in old times sent to watch their generals, but whom nobody here paid any attention to. Then we had a German captain, an ex-officer or non-commissioned officer of the Prussian Guard, who had come out to organise their artillery for them; a curious character, with a wonderful capacity for drink, who had tried to dress up his motley crew and make them resemble his beloved 'Guard Artillery,' and was especially proud of his band, consisting of two fiddles, a concertina, and a guitar—an unfortunate family of wandering half-breed musicians, who were playing their way through the Transvaal, when by a happy inspiration they were 'commandeered' and sent off with the expedition. In the evening the captain gave us a small entertainment in his tent—whist and music. Rudolph insisted on our drinking up his gin to save the captain getting drunk on it, and we emptied his bottle; but as we saw the captain open another bottle after we left, and Rudolph complained of a bad headache in the morning, I am not sure that the manœuvre was

successful. Camp discipline was amusing. Returning from our entertainment the bugle sounded 'lights out.' A field cornet on duty, passing a waggon with a light in it, calls out, 'Now, then, put out that light there;' answer from within, 'If you want to put this light out you had better bring a precious big stick in with you.' . . . Had a good deal of interesting talk with Rudolph and Bell about native affairs; also about chances of federation.

June 27.—Started from camp. Rudolph had provided two carriers, warriors in feathers and skins, to take us as far as Josan's, with orders to that chief to forward us to Delagoa Bay.

June 28.—Made fifteen miles' rough walking before breakfast, afterwards entered on the country where no cattle or horses can live on account of the fly, but a rich game country. About sundown came to the foot of the Lebombo ridge of hills, and an hour later reached Josan's kraal, about halfway up, after a tough march of twenty-nine miles. Josan at first proposed that we should go on to another kraal, two miles distant, but we sat down in front of his hut and declined to move; while our boy, on whom it had been strongly impressed by Rudolph and Bell that we were not ordinary traders, but great English chiefs, held forth on our state and dignity to Josan. Finally he had a hut cleared out for us, and treated us very well.

June 29. — Started with two carriers, one a willing intelligent fellow, the other very unwilling; climbed the steep slope of the Lebombo (about 800 feet), then across a broken stony plateau all day. On the road our unwilling Kaffir dropped his bundle and ran away, carrying Baker's coat with him. Held a council, and determined we could not afford to turn back for anybody, so carried the bundle on our own heads, Baker and myself taking it mile about. Had some pleasant experience of carrying fifty pounds on one's head over loose stones on a hot day. Met a party of hunters, and our carrier so worked on their feelings as to the disgrace of two great English chiefs having to carry their own kit through the country, that one of the hunters turned back with us, and engaged to carry to Delagoa Bay for a

blanket. After many hours of most trying walking, barely doing two miles an hour over the loose rolling stones, we reached the other side of the Lebombo plateau, and commenced a steep knee-breaking descent. . . Only made twenty-two miles. Guides declare we cannot reach Delagoa Bay in less than three days, but we mean to do it in two, and as yet we have kept our time day by day, despite of every one.

June 30.—Started early, well supplied with meat by last evening's sport, and commenced crossing the 'deadly belt' —a damp flat, covered with long grass and mimosa. Passed great herds of quagga, all kinds of antelope, and buffalo.

July 1.—Had to wade Umbolus River, which is here about a hundred yards across, and nearly waist deep.

Climbing ridge, found ourselves in sight of Delagoa Bay, but on the other side of the bay from the town. After about eight miles skirting bay came to Lorenço Marquez.

Actual distance from Clarke's, as we travelled it, 200 miles, but, by avoiding some unnecessary *détours*, and not going to the king's kraal, might be reduced to about 180.

July 2.—Visited town, a poor little place, built on a mud or sand bank, at the foot of the hill, forming almost an island, being surrounded (all but a little neck) by sea or swamp; site apparently chosen for defence against Kaffirs, the hill above offering an excellent and healthy site for a town, which, if the place improves, will certainly be made use of. A magnificent bay and sheet of water, with plenty of depth almost everywhere. Called on the Governor, a young sailor, who has taken the appointment for three years, to gain a step in rank, nice-looking, nice-mannered, speaks English perfectly, and very civil; presented my letters from Sir Garnet. Talked over arrangements for proposed introduction of labourers from these parts into Natal, and promised to get us carriers to go on to the gold fields. Rather astonished and somewhat mystified at a veteran of my age and rank wandering about the country in this style; in a recent despatch he had spoken of the English as 'our energetic, but insidious, allies;' and I think he will be more than ever convinced of our energy and insidiousness.

At Delagoa Bay great difficulty was experienced in getting carriers for the journey to the gold fields. But they determined to start on the 5th at daylight —with or without carriers—carrying a reduced kit between them if necessary; meantime three carriers turned up and they started with blankets and eight days' provisions.

July 5.—A little before sundown reached a rocky stream and slope, at the foot of the first rise from the dead plains we had been crossing since leaving the bay; halted there for the night; total, twenty-four miles. Jack, as we have christened the big carrier, very useful in constructing a hut of boughs and grass. While we were cooking, Baker took out the gun and got a small buck. About dusk lions began to roar about; later, one roared so close to the camp that our carriers crowded in on us and lit large fires all round, and could not be persuaded to go down to the river for water.

On the 6th the Lebombo range was crossed, the carriers complaining of the pace, and on the 8th they entered a different kind of country—'rocky conical hills (kopjes), stony ridges, and plenty of running water instead of the monotonous flat'—and spent the night in a trader's tent at the foot of Pretoria's Kop—a hill supposed to mark the boundary of the 'fly' country:

From this to the sea is infested by the tsetse fly, of which we saw many specimens—something between a common fly and a horse-fly in appearance, but with longer and more pointed wings. No domesticated animal has yet been able to live in this country—cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, and camels have all been tried, and have all died, and even dogs very rarely survive a trip across. Along the road we passed the skeletons of hundreds of these unfortunate animals, and also of carts and waggons that had

had to be abandoned in consequence. All goods, therefore, have to be sent up from Delagoa to Pretoria's Kop by carriers; after that they can be fetched by waggons.

Our carriers are quite beat; we had to wait at every stream to let them come up, and they have hardly energy enough now to cook their food. They complain to Mr. Rush that we are rather like quagga than white men—always trotting. Jack still tries to look cheerful, but his limbs move very stiffly, and he points pathetically to his thighs.

July 9.—Started early, and made eleven miles over a rougher country. Halted and bathed at the Sand River. Carriers quite unable to keep up with us. Made arrangements accordingly, dividing amongst us the necessary supplies. Baker, who, with his long legs and stride, is apt to be a little impatient and contemptuous of my more moderate pace, seized the heaviest bundle, and strode manfully up the hill, at a pace I did not attempt to keep up with.

Baker, however, took a wrong track; he and Colley lost sight of each other, and in spite of Baker's pace Colley reached Mac-mac (the first of the gold diggings) fully twenty-four hours earlier, after a long and perilous scramble in the dark along a path which, though it saved fifteen miles, was 'the roughest night walk I ever attempted.'

First I floundered through a black reedy swamp, sometimes over my knees, then a long descent over rough boulders, then waded a river about waist deep, and then up the long and steep ascent of the Drakensberg, more than 5.000 feet high. Near the top I was nearly beat; the path skirted under a high projecting peak along its nearly precipitous side, sometimes up, sometimes down to arid boulders. The peak hid the moon, and it was often impossible to distinguish the path. I got several heavy rolls, and occasionally had to feel up and down the side on hands and knees till I found the path again.

On the 10th Colley went up to Pilgrim's Rest, a famous diggers' camp, about 6,000 feet above the sea and in a wild and beautiful valley, and visited some of the claims.

I saw the commissioners and bank agents, and talked over some proposed arrangements for the conveyance of gold to Natal. Saw all the diggers returning from work—a rough-looking set, with the wildest of hats and costumes, a French or Italian military overcoat (light grey, with pink facings on the collar) being a favourite costume; but a wonderfully orderly, well-behaved set, with a large proportion of gentlemen, army men, university men, &c., among them.

At Leydenberg, which, as originally planned, he reached on the 12th, the journal breaks off into brief daily record. On July 13 he started in the post cart for Pretoria; next day it was lumbering along the high veldt region between Leydenberg and Nazareth. There is a record on July 12 of reaching a surly abusive Dutchman's in the afternoon, and a subsequent letter describes the incident, showing the feeling of the farmers in the centre of the Transvaal.

I had made no arrangement for carrying food, and we could get little to eat on the road. Most of the houses where we stopped to change horses belonged to Dutchmen, who were too proud to sell, and too inhospitable to give one anything but coffee; and the nights I spent out on the plains at an altitude of about 6,000 feet, with a bitter wind and sharp frost, were not pleasant. Some of the Dutchmen were inclined to be abusive; one old gentleman in particular asked me to come in and sit down, and then opened out on me—asked the driver why he had brought that 'karl' here; said he knew all about me and why I had come; that I was a spy looking out for the British Government to annex them; that he did not hate me so much, for I was merely

doing the orders of my Government. I thought we should have had a row, but his wife came in and effected a diversion, and it turned out, curiously enough, that she was a relation of the Macleans—English on her mother's side—and though the old gentleman continued to be very offensive I had to keep my temper on her account.[2]

Colley reached Pretoria on July 16, and stayed there four days. In this interval he met the acting President Joubert, and other officials:

I had some interviews with the acting President, and settled amicably some little matters between our two Governments. Before leaving he gave me a sort of banquet of honour, which was cooked by his wife, whose flushed face could be seen peering through the kitchen door now and again to see how we were getting on, and served by his son, who waited on us.

In reading this sentence, so full of the simple homestead life of these Dutch farmers, it is impossible to prevent the mind running on to a day a few years forward, when this same President Joubert will be Commandant-General of the Boer forces barring the road into the Transvaal against Colley's little army at Lang's Nek. There is another significant passage in this letter: 'At Pretoria I was most hospitably received by all the English residents. There, as in most of the Transvaal towns, the bulk of the population and all the principal merchants and traders are English, and looking forward to the country coming under English rule in some form or another.'

How long shall we continue to confuse the talk of the South African town with the feeling of the South African country? 'Because half a dozen grass-

[2] August 1, 1875, to his sister.

hoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chirp,' wrote Burke more than a century ago, 'while many great cattle repose under the shadow of the trees, chew the cud, and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field.'

CHAPTER IX

TO INDIA WITH LORD LYTTON

Transvaal Report—Aldershot appointment—Military Secretary to Viceroy —Frontier policy—The active and passive schools—Mission to Khelat.

COLLEY reached Wakkerstroom on July 24, thirty-three days since he had left it to begin his journey to Delagoa Bay. In the interval he had walked 400 miles, and travelled by the roughest of post carts about 600 miles. At Pretoria he had met an old geographer named Jeppe, then engaged on a revised map of those countries to whom his surveys of the route to and from Delagoa Bay were valuable. 'I find,' writes Colley at the time, 'that the country we traversed going to Delagoa Bay is so little known that our undertaking it without guides and interpreters and carrying it out in the time we did was looked upon as a feat which made us famous.' The report which followed this rapid journey was of much immediate interest, nor do its suggestions and conclusions lose importance when read in the light of after events.

Colley described the Transvaal as a country in which there was growing up a strong English feeling, a British element likely to become dominant, and which was already rapidly supplanting that of the old Dutch Boers. So evenly were the parties divided that the pro-English side was estimated at two-fifths

of the whole white population; these two-fifths formed the great majority of the town and mining populations. In the country districts, however, the great bulk of the farmers were still of the old Boer type; and though among these people there remained much of the former prejudice against English government and Englishmen individually, the party was decidedly a decreasing one, both in numbers and animosity. The most serious obstacle to closer union with England was undoubtedly to be found in the suspicion and indignation which our annexation of the diamond fields had aroused. It was alike condemned by the English section and by the Boers. The glimpse Colley had had of the 'Commando' in the Swazi country had not been lost upon him. 'The true military strength of the Republic lay,' he thought, 'in its "Commando" system, and in the number of hardy farmers, trained from childhood to ride and shoot and undergo hardships and privation, which it counted within its borders.' On the whole the report conveyed the impression that the apple of the Transvaal would probably soon fall of itself, either to confederation with the remainder of South Africa, or to some other form of union with England. If Delagoa Bay could be obtained, the progress of union with Great Britain would be immensely accelerated. The feeling towards England in the Transvaal was much less hostile than it was in the Orange Free State; the Transvaalers had not the unity of the Free State, and they had, as yet, no strong nationality; the annexation of the diamond fields had affected them less directly. The primitive Dutch administration, suited to a pastoral people, was unsuited to the wants of an active and pushing commu-

nity, and if Delagoa Bay were once in English hands, a very short time would see the Transvaal a prosperous and wealthy English colony.

Such, briefly, was the substance of Colley's report.

It may be questioned whether this view of the Transvaal, ably though it dealt with to-day and to-morrow, took sufficient heed of the long yesterday which the Dutch of the Transvaal loved and lived much in. Out of that 'sleepy hollow of the past' they were ready to awake, not as Rip Van Winkle woke with rusty gun and rotten shot-belt, but with breechloading rifle in hand and well-stocked ammunition-pouch on shoulder, to fight, if needs they must fight, for their cherished independence.

While Colley was at work feeling the pulse of the Transvaal, another member of Sir Garnet Wolseley's staff had been sent to report upon the Orange Free State, and on the chances of colonial confederation in that Republic. Sir Garnet Wolseley had himself visited the outlying districts of Natal, the Tugela frontier, and the Zulu locations, and by August 12 all the members of the mission were again united at Maritzburg. Then came three weeks of report-writing, committee work, and social gaieties, the usual party at Government House being supplemented by Mr. Froude, the historian, then on his second political mission to South Africa. It was a strange coincidence which had brought to Maritzburg at this moment, when so much of importance was being done, the philosopher who but a little time before had been speaking to the Boers words old as the Roman world—but ever new in the ears of men—telling them that those who won in the end 'were not the speculators, the miners, and the storekeepers,

but the hardy yeomen, the peasants who fought for home and fireside ; ' telling them, too, that the labour of the diamond fields and the gold mines was ' unprofitable labour,' that the real wealth of the Republic lay in the development of their agricultural and pastoral resources, and that their national independence could only be kept intact by courage and self-denial and hardihood of life.

Confederation had for some time been the dream of the Colonial Minister, Lord Carnarvon, and Mr. Froude had come out in a semi-official capacity to urge it upon the people of South Africa. But the forces arrayed against the proposed union were powerful, and foremost among them was suspicion on the part of the Boers, both in the Free State and the Transvaal, of our sincerity in the matter. Confederation was but a cloak, they said, to hide designs against their freedom. When, early in September, Sir Garnet Wolseley left for England, Colley remained in South Africa in order to visit the Orange Free State and the diamond fields, and to gauge the feeling of those communities towards confederation. He started on his journey about the middle of the month, having meanwhile closed the Colenso inquiry already alluded to. Very cordial was his reception at Bloemfontein, where

> . . . the ball in our honour did come off, and where we met such kindness and hospitality from the President (Mr. Brand) and his family as I really never experienced in my life. But that ball nearly killed me; we had been on the road since four o'clock in the morning till seven in the evening, a very rough road and a hot dusty day; and about three o'clock in the morning, when the ball was nearly at an end, and I was feebly attempting inane conversation with a new partner, she suddenly asked me, without any provocation

whatever, 'whether I believed there was such a thing as abstract truth, or whether we were not apt to be deceived by the reflex of our own individualities.' Lord Mandeville says he saw me suddenly turn pale, and was afraid something had happened. I don't know how I got to the end of that dance, but I know as soon as it was over I rushed to Mrs. Brand and put myself under her protection. I have since heard that the lady had sat next Mr. Froude at dinner one night, and had ever since believed herself to be intellectual.

. . . We were treated in true princely style at Bloemfontein; the post cart which ought to have started before daylight was detained for four hours that we might sleep off the fatigues of the ball, and the President and all his family turned out to see us off. Certainly among my pleasantest recollections of this country will be the hearty and unaffected kindness of that family.[1]

As he neared Kingwilliamstown he passed many of the German villages which he had originally laid out, 'some, thriving settlements, others had altogether disappeared.' It was curious to see again the old scenes, and to meet former friends:

My old friend Kreli has been giving trouble in the Transkei, and 500 mounted police and two guns had just been sent up to protect the Indutsha location and keep the peace. Some of my old Kaffirs who happened to be within reach of Kingwilliamstown came in to see me, but I did not see any of my special friends, nor did I beg a cow this time. . .

At Durban he expected to get a steamer to take him, *via* Zanzibar and Aden, to join his regiment in India. But finding no chance of getting forward he turned back to Capetown, where he was laid up with an attack of illness, the result of hardship and

[1] Port Elizabeth, October 16, 1875, to his sister.

bad climate during his Delagoa Bay journey. Thus he missed the next east-coast steamer to India, and on November 22 all his plans were changed by the news of his appointment as assistant quartermaster-general at Aldershot. Three days afterwards he sailed for England.

He had remained long enough in South Africa to see the collapse of the much-desired conference on confederation, the Colonial Minister's first attempt at the creation of a single dominion in South Africa. Another passenger on board ship was Mr. Froude, who undoubtedly saw further into the Dutch difficulty than did most of the people on the spot, and this because he realised that the history that wears best is not woven on the loom of the Stock Exchange. In a letter written after this voyage, Colley describes the impression which close association with Mr. Froude had left upon his mind:

I came home from the Cape, and almost lived on the way, with Mr. Froude; a mind which I am sure you would have appreciated and enjoyed as thoroughly as I did. I don't know if you are as warm an admirer of his writing as I am; to me there is no English prose equal to some passages of his; such, for instance, as that about the middle of the first chapter of his history—'For indeed a change was coming upon the world.' It was rather a sad mind too, sometimes grand, sometimes pathetic and tender, usually cynical, but often relating with the highest appreciation and with wonderful beauty of language some gallant deed of one of his heroes of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. He seemed to have gone through every phase of thought, and come to the end 'all is vanity.' He himself used to say the interest of life to a thinking man was exhausted at thirty or thirty-five. After that there remained nothing but disappointment of earlier visions and hopes. Thank goodness

I have not thought quite so fast! Sometimes there was something almost fearful in the gloom and utter disbelief and defiance of his mind.[2]

Colley took up his duties at Aldershot on the last day of 1875. But scarcely had he settled into the new groove, when there came one of those sudden calls by telegraph which had now become familiar to him. 'Telegraphed for to London. Saw Sir Garnet and Bulwer' is all the diary tells of it, and next day there is the entry; 'Saw Bulwer and Sir Garnet. Saw Burne at India Office.' That evening, February 4, he received the following short note from Lord Lytton:

Dear Colonel Colley,—I have much pleasure in offering you the military secretaryship in India. If you be willing to accept it, I should be glad to see you to-morrow.

Yours very truly,
LYTTON.

From Capetown two months earlier he had been on the point of starting for India to join his regiment in the modest *rôle* of junior major. He was now about to go there on the staff of the Governor-General in a position which was fraught with issues and possibilities of greater consequence than had perhaps ever before been attached to it.

The chief whose friend and close adviser he was soon to become was a man of rare attainments, and had the faculty of discovering and drawing out the powers of others. 'A man who keeps all parts of one's brain active,' Colley wrote of him on the voyage out; 'a poet and a statesman.'[3] The union may not

[2] Paris March 5, 1876, to Miss Hamilton. [3] *Ibid.*

always prove so fortunate for fame as it perhaps deserves—the poet and the statesman appeal to differing audiences. But Colley, who in the brief sentence quoted had touched the character of Lord Lytton's genius, was able through his own width of intellectual life to appreciate the new Viceroy's varied gifts. Not less attractive was the brilliant humour which lit up those gifts, and which, as the intimacy grew between the two men, flashes out everywhere in their correspondence.

For a month following his appointment Colley was incessantly occupied, closing the work so recently begun at Aldershot and preparing to enter upon the untravelled path of his new duties. The journey came as a welcome respite. On March 2, he joined the Lyttons at Dover, *en route* for Naples, where steamer was to be taken for Bombay. At Paris there was a pleasant rest of five days; a week at Naples; and then a longer interval for study of the Indian question and Blue-book reading, while the 'Orontes' was making the usual slow rate of troop-ship progress towards Bombay. In a letter written during this outward voyage, I find a passage defining the effect upon his mind of work for work's sake, and work for ambitious objects:

I have worked both for ambition and for the pleasure of the work's sake, and though ambition is the keener stimulus, the other work was the most satisfactory even at the time, and far the most afterwards. Fifteen years ago I worked for ambition, and had all the success a man could desire at the Cape, at the Staff College, and in promotion. During the ten years which elapsed between my leaving the Staff College and the Ashanti Expedition, I felt myself dropping out of the race to a certain extent; and during the two years I spent at the Staff College as professor, I had almost given

up the idea of a career for myself. Yet I then enjoyed and I now look back on my work at that time with more satisfaction than at any other—when I was working, not for place, or for ambition, but for the sake of my work, of the profession I was so fond of, and of the influence I felt one could exert upon others by keeping them up to the mark. Since Ashanti, I have been again dragged into the race as it were, and yet, with every success I could ever have hoped for, have not the same real pleasure in the work.[4]

That this was no passing idea of the work that best repaid its own toil, another letter, written six months later, shows:

I still think you don't quite understand the difference I draw about working purely for the work's sake. Ambition is a very mixed quality; there is always a strong personal element in it. An ambitious man likes good work because it is his, and is not pleased if some one else does it equally well, or gets the credit of his work. Undoubtedly success, visible success, has many charms, but has also many drawbacks. But there is another kind of work, when you are rather lending a hand than directing—cheering others, giving a shoulder now and then when there is a stick, doing odd bits here and there, when you work as I say for the love of the work and of seeing work well done—which, though it brings no great outward credit, I think in the long run gives more real satisfaction, and has one great recommendation, to me at least, that it is free from jealousies and heartburnings.

. . . I forget if I ever told you of General Lee. He has always been my greatest military hero, such a mixture of gentleness and everything that was sweet and tender with the grandest military qualities. When I was travelling in the Southern States they said everywhere, 'Oh, it was not so much for what Lee was during the war as for what he was to us after the war that we worship him;' and in almost every house I went to, I found letters of his, written

[4] Paris, March 5, 1876, to Miss Hamilton.

after the war. Every man, woman, and child almost seemed to have written to him when in difficulties, and received encouragement, comfort, advice, as their case wanted.[5]

But whether he enjoyed more the old work when advancement seemed remote, or the new when almost any preferment was possible, mattered little so far as the quality of the work done was concerned. Lord Lytton had said to Colley when the military secretaryship was first offered to him, 'After all, an appointment is always what the man who holds it—makes it.'[6] And that the present military secretary would give significance to any appointment is made evident by an able paper on the 'Military Aspect of the Central Asian Question,' which he wrote on the voyage to Bombay. No more comprehensive view of this immense theatre of operations has ever been grouped into the compass of a single document. The confidential nature of such a subject prevents any detailed reference to it here; but it may be observed that the twenty years which have elapsed since it was written have borne out the correctness of its conclusions as to the progress of events in Central Asia. The writer foresaw that nothing could stop the steady flow of Russian power from its base on the Caspian to the foot-hills of the Hindu Kush, and the measures he thought necessary to forestall or neutralise the effects of that movement upon our position in India still retain practical interest, and in some particulars have already been translated into fact.

This question of how to check the Russian advance in Central Asia was now engaging the

[5] Simla, September 10, 1876, to Miss Hamilton.

[6] August 5, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

attention of the English Government. Nearly two years had passed since the change of Ministry had occurred which placed Mr. Disraeli at the head of affairs. He considered himself in a position to make a new departure in foreign policy. His enemies were not only in the dust, but were, in that lowly position, quarrelling amongst themselves. His great antagonist had retired from parliamentary strife, and was directing his vehement intellectuality against the head of the Catholic Church. The country, it was said, had had a surfeit of the smaller politics, of votes and ratings, of legislation upon public worship and public houses. As to other nations, America was still involved in the financial difficulties consequent upon her great civil conflict; France and Germany were only intent upon their own frontiers; Russia, the power from which opposition must be expected, had not yet quite recovered, in Europe at all events, the position lost in the Crimean War. The time seemed favourable to an extension of boundary and increase of influence which had for first and principal object the selection of future positions on the shores of the Mediterranean and on the Indian frontier where the final struggle between Russia and Great Britain would probably be decided. During the four preceding years the progress of Russian arms in Central Asia had been great. Russia's conquest of the khanates of Bokhara, her invasion of Khiva and extension of power among the Turkomans of the Kirghiz Steppes, had brought her outposts within measurable distance of Afghanistan. In 1875 the Eastern question was being stirred anew along the European and Asiatic borders of Turkey; and the time seemed at hand when Russian armies might

again move upon Constantinople. It had become an urgent question to the Government whether, in face of the further approach of Russia towards the Indian frontier, England should maintain the attitude of inaction which for some years she had adopted towards the Amir of Afghanistan, or should anticipate her Asiatic rival by extending and consolidating her predominance in that country.

For more than a generation there had existed two schools of politicians in England and in India on this great question. Of course they had given each other names. There were the men of 'masterly inactivity' and the men of 'mischievous activity'—those who were said to wait upon events and those who thought that events might wait upon them. Chief among the former stood Lord Lawrence. These schools differed as to the imminence of Russian aggression; but it was upon the method of preparation against that aggression that they differed far more seriously. The valley of the Indus from Peshawur to the Indian Ocean has along its western side a range of mountains rising in highest altitude to 12,000 feet above sea level. Beyond those mountains lay Afghanistan and Baluchistan, states inhabited by fierce and fanatical Mahommedan tribes. Into these wild countries the men of 'masterly inactivity' did not wish to go. Let us remain in the valley of the Indus (they said), develop our internal resources, and let the people of India see that we are ruling them for their own welfare. Those arid and desolate regions beyond once entered, we shall have to maintain there large and costly garrisons; we shall rouse to undying hatred the mountain tribes whose motto for a thousand years has been that they were 'content with all the

hardships of life, but never had been, and never would be, content with a master.' Leave them to themselves, and they will be our friends; go among them, and they must become our enemies.

Such, in brief, were the arguments and assumptions of those who were said to wait upon events. But stronger perhaps than any other opinion put forward by them was the belief that India could not bear the burden of extra taxation which a forward policy might entail, and that to maintain such garrisons in Afghanistan as could hold that country would mean the complete breakdown of the financial equilibrium of Hindostan.

The forward school could adduce arguments of equal if opposite cogency. 'A century ago two thousand miles had intervened between English and Russian territory in Asia. Fifty years ago the outposts had drawn nearer by a thousand miles; in 1876 they were but half that distance apart. Should we ourselves remain stationary, it might ultimately happen that Russian hosts would look down on the valley of the Indus from the passes of the Sulimani range.

Colley, deeply read in the science of war and in the practical lessons of modern campaigns, contributed materially to the formation of those newer opinions on the strategical aspect of the question which began at this time to prevail. In opposition to the school which professed itself satisfied that the actual frontier was good in a military sense, he maintained that it was as weak and faulty as it could well be; that a mountain frontier to be strong should hold the entrance to the passes on the further side as well as their debouches on the nearer one; that otherwise a powerful enemy in possession of Afghanistan could

select his road and his point of attack; that the existing frontier was convenient only to the treacherous and turbulent tribes beyond, affording them, as it did, a ready means of descent upon our people, and of retreat to their own fastnesses whither they were safe from our pursuit.

The desirability of improving this state of things by taking advantage of such occasions as might arise to secure the principal passes was urged by the forward school. That term, like every other phrase by which it is sought to summarise the collective opinions of many men, was in a sense misleading. The forward school had many sets within its fold. There were those who would have pushed the policy very far, revising completely the existing boundaries of India, and going to meet the enemy whose advance from the north and west they believed in; there were others who would have been content with an intermediate position between the existing frontiers of the two great Powers; and there were again some, and Colley was one of them, whose views of desired extension did not reach beyond possession and command of the three principal passes—the Bolan, the Kuram Valley, and the Khyber—leading from India to Afghanistan.

In his opinion the policy of inaction had not been justified by results. During eight years it had been tried, and while our influence had decreased in Afghanistan, that of Russia was increasing. We were, in fact, trusting for success to a turn of the wheel of fortune; while we ought to have opposed the approach and influence of Russia by every method of active alliance with Kabul. The attainment of that difficult political ideal—a faithful

intermediate ally—would assure to India economic advantages which might well counterbalance attendant responsibilities.

At the threshold of the whole question lay this stumbling-block of Afghanistan. The waiting school admitted the necessity of supporting the ruler of Afghanistan when the moment of aggression from the north came. The active school declared we should anticipate that moment. Extreme men might be for conquest. But the cooler heads of the party desired to consolidate our alliance with Sher Ali by diplomatic pressure rather than insist upon friendship by force.

Space allows only a scanty summary of Afghan affairs at the time of Lord Lytton's appointment. The good understanding with the Amir, which dated from the Governor-Generalship of Lord Lawrence, had steadily declined. We had refused in 1869 to accord the treaty of alliance which upon Sher Ali's accession he had solicited from Lord Mayo at Umballa. Other causes of estrangement and misunderstanding arose: the anti-Afghan award of the Seistan Boundary Commission; our interference on behalf of Sher Ali's rebellious son, Yakub Khan; our refusal to secure the Afghan succession to Abdulla Jan; and our refusal in 1873 (when the Amir sent a special envoy to Simla) to guarantee his kingdom against external aggression. From that time he assumed an attitude of increasing resentment and suspicion towards England, and more willingly entertained the courtesies of Russia, which hitherto he had rejected.

Such was the situation at the close of 1875. It was one which the English Government thought it

unwise to neglect in its relations with Afghanistan; and when Lord Lytton was selected by Mr. Disraeli to succeed Lord Northbrook, the appointment was known to represent an important change of attitude towards our Indian Empire and its neighbours. It was resolved as a first move in the new policy to try and induce the Amir Sher Ali to receive British agents at certain cities in his dominions. If the Amir should be disposed to enter on a closer alliance based on this condition, the Home Government and the new Viceroy were ready to go a long way to meet Sher Ali's wishes and to secure his friendship. All the Amir had asked in 1869 and 1873 was now to be at his disposal—liberal subsidies, definite guarantees, and strong material aid against aggression. If the preliminary stipulations were only what previous Governments had considered necessary, still they marked in Afghan eyes concessions of considerable significance; but it was said that Sher Ali himself would have accepted them at that earlier date when he still trusted our friendship and looked to us for support.

Lord Lytton reached Bombay on April 7. Settling down into the business of Indian life occupied a few days, and then the first steps were taken. The change in the Viceroyalty, and the necessary announcement to the Amir of the Queen's assumption of the Imperial title, seemed to offer occasion for a friendly and complimentary mission to Kabul, which was also to discuss with the Amir matters of grave importance to the Governments of India and Afghanistan. A native officer on the personal staff of the Viceroy was sent forthwith to Kabul as an advance courier to inform the Amir of the intention

to despatch Sir Lewis Pelly on a special embassy to Kabul.

Rumours of remote disturbance seem already to have reached the Kabul Durbar, threatening vague trouble from this quarter and from that. A sirdar from the Bokharian frontier brought a curious tale. 'It was openly said by the Russians in Samarkand and Turkestan that the daughter of the Emperor of Russia, married to one of the English princes, had been offended, and had complained to her father; there was a rupture between the two Powers.' It was rumoured, too, that the English were about to occupy Kandahar. On hearing these and other reports all seemed concerned, shaking their heads while the Amir remained mute. Upon one point he had made up his mind. 'He believed the English Government, thinking seriously of the approach of the Russians to Merv, were desirous of sending an envoy to Kabul, or by his permission to remain at Herat. It will embroil him in difficulties, he thinks, and give cause to the Russians at Samarkand to say that the Afghans are taking hostile measures against them.'

A few days later the Viceroy's native envoy reached Kabul. He was sent back with a letter couched in evasive language, but practically amounting to a refusal of Lord Lytton's proposal. Nor could the further correspondence elicit more favourable response than a suggestion on the Amir's part of a frontier meeting between the agents of the two Governments—a suggestion which ultimately resulted in the abortive conference at Peshawur. There can, I think, be little doubt that the Amir had now assumed the attitude of a potentate between two rival suitors for favour; in poise of mind amid

their solicitations, and by no means in a hurry to lightly sell himself to either.

Those who have followed thus far the life of Colonel Colley will understand something at least of the energy and determination with which he took up the great questions which his new appointment opened to him. The hot season of 1876 had been spent at Simla. Amid the more serious diplomatic and administrative work there was plenty of lighter occupation. In September Colley had written to a friend:

You ask me *what* a military secretary really is. I think I can best answer in Lord Lytton's words when he offered it me: 'After all an appointment is always very much what the man who fills it—makes it,' but this is a little vague. In the first place, then, he is supposed to have the control of the Viceroy's household and establishments, an expenditure amounting to about 100,000*l.* a year. Next, he is Lord Chamberlain—arranges levees, drawing-rooms, &c., and some curious questions he is called upon to settle! A short time ago a question was referred to me as to whether certain individuals were to be allowed to wear shoes in Government House. Yesterday morning I had a telegram from Sir Salar Jung to know whether he and the Nizam might appear at Delhi in carriages or must come on elephants. I venture to say the Lord Chamberlain was never perplexed with such questions. Then he has the patronage of about twenty-five regiments of infantry and fifteen of cavalry, which are supposed to be directly under the Viceroy. . . . Lastly, he is the Viceroy's confidential adviser, though not his official and responsible one on all army matters. Such are his supposed duties; but at the present moment I am just preparing to start on a confidential mission to the Khan of Khelat—quite contrary to all precedents of a military secretary's duties! This, however, is a secret at present.

In about a month we start for a charming tour; through Kashmir, thence down the Punjab and Sindh frontier to

Kurachi, and so back by Bombay to Delhi, where we are to have great doings on the occasion of the proclamation of the Imperial title, and the greatest assemblage and finest spectacle ever seen in India.[7]

The allusion to the coming mission to Khelat brings us to the second move in the new frontier policy —the stationing of British troops at Quetta near the northern extremity of the Bolan Pass.[8] The conduct of this move was to be in Colley's hands, and in a letter written a little earlier we find further mention of it:

Khelat affairs are standing over until the return of Sandeman's mission, when we can review our position there better. It seems to be the old question of whether to support a ruler whom you can make responsible for your frontier, or to ignore him and deal with the sub-tribes independently; the first policy answers best so long as you have a decent fellow to deal with, but breaks down when you get a hopeless blackguard—and that seems to be our position there now.[9]

This 'hopeless blackguard' was Mir Khodadad Khan, the ruler of Khelat, the general character of whose rule can be appreciated by an incident which marked its beginning. On the day of his proclamation as khan, the chiefs who had raised him to the dignity asked for a redress of grievances. Their camp lay below the battlements of the Khan's palace. His reply to the petition of rights was a general discharge of artillery into the tents of his sirdars. The officer whose name appears in the letter above quoted, Captain Robert Sandeman, the political agent

[7] Simla, September 10, 1876, to Miss Hamilton.

[8] In accordance with a treaty of more than twenty years' standing with the Ruler of Khelat.

[9] June 4, 1876, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

on the Punjab frontier, was a remarkable personality. His name is now identified with the system of conciliation and control of the border tribes which he practised so effectively in Baluchistan—methods essential to the permanent success of any forward policy.

In the original plan of action brought by Lord Lytton from England, Sir Lewis Pelly was to have visited Quetta on his road to Kabul, *via* the Bolan and Kandahar, and arrange with the Khan of Khelat that part of the new policy which had reference to Baluchistan. But when Lord Lytton reached Bombay it was found that Sandeman had already, under Lord Northbrook's orders, left for Khelat on a mission of mediation between the Khan and his sirdars. It was thought better to allow him to proceed, keeping, as we have seen in Colley's letter, an open mind as to subsequent action. Lord Lytton attached a special importance to negotiations with the Khan on account of the strategical value of Quetta, and decided to send Colley to join Sandeman at Khelat. Early in October he started from Simla. He carried with him a draft treaty embodying the new features of frontier policy which he was to present to the Khan for his signature. The incidents of the journey and its results cannot be better described than by passages from letters written at the time:

On the Indus: October 5.

The scenery is monotonous—a broad muddy stream with an occasional alligator or queer bird of some kind—pelicans, fish-hawks, &c., low mud banks, with tall reedy grass and occasional palm trees, and an unbroken flat as far as one can see. At night we run alongside the bank and make fast to it, and the Hindoos all land to cook and eat. When they

have done, the jackals come round and sit on their tails and howl in hideous chorus.[1]

Jacobabad: October 7.

I should be sorry to invest in house property here. The very existence of the place depends upon an embankment which has been built at an expense of some 8 lakhs, but has given way every time the Indus has touched it.

The British officer is a strange and very amusing creature. A young officer arrived here only this morning, fresh from Khelat, or at least from the Baluch Hills, among which he has been wandering for nearly two months. I at once got alongside him for news. His view of the political situation was comprised in the opinion that Khelat was 'the d——dest hole in the world,' and the people 'not a bad lot of beggars, but dirty, and d——d thieves.' But he had fished up nearly every pass and stream, and could tell me exactly what holes to go to for the biggest fish and what flies to catch them with. I couldn't make out that he had taken any escort or thought it necessary to trouble himself about the inhabitants in any way; and I believe a chap like that, if he could only be trained to keep his eyes open as well, could fish and loaf his way anywhere.[2]

Khelat: October 15.

We reached this last night after a rapid journey of five days from Jacobabad. Our kit could not keep up with us, so I shall not personally wait on the Khan till to-morrow evening; but as he has been uneasy ever since he heard that I was coming and there were various rumours about, I arranged with Sandeman that he should visit the Khan this afternoon, and let him know generally the character of the communication of which I was the bearer, as well as arrange for the delivery of your letter. This he has done, and reports a most satisfactory interview—the Khan delighted generally, anxious to meet you at Jacobabad, pleased at the idea of Delhi but rather afraid of the expense; very glad that the troops remain, grateful for the increased subsidy and the grant, but already trying to get as much out of it

[1] To Lord Lytton. [2] To Lord Lytton.

for his own pocket as possible; always finishing up with expressing his readiness to do the wishes of Government. Sandeman anticipates no serious difficulty with any of the clauses. . .

I have found Sandeman throughout most anxious to meet your wishes, raising no difficulties except where there seemed good reason, and at once setting himself to find a solution. . .

Orders have been issued for the Punjab Infantry to go to Quetta and hut themselves there; the cavalry, Sindh and Punjab, to go to Dadur; and the Sindh Infantry and guns to accompany the Khan as personal escort to Gundava. I suggested these movements because, while still apparently merely escort movements explained by the climate and the movements of Sandeman and the Khan, they are really bringing the troops into the positions we wish ultimately to hold.[3]

This last sentence held the whole matter of the new Baluchistan policy. The Punjab Infantry at Quetta marked a forward move.

Next day the State visit to the Khan was made. He and his Court are well described by the officer who acted as Persian interpreter to Colley:

Our way led up a narrow winding passage, 6 feet wide, with a slope of one in ten, which opened on a small courtyard 20 yards square. In one corner of this courtyard was a small doorway, and at it stood a rough square-built man, dressed in a rusty velvet garment, with a brown shawl turban on his head —this was the Khan. We were led into the reception room, a dirty room with an open balcony to the north-east, whence a wide view was had of the whole country. . .

Early the next morning the Khan held a review of his troops. There were about 1,200 on parade; most of the infantry fine swarthy fellows, the cavalry utterly useless, mounted on broken-down screws of every shape and size.

[3] To Lord Lytton.

The Khan himself was a sight to see, clad in a suit of chain armour, steel gauntlets on his arms, and a gold casque on his head. He rode a dun horse, its trappings covered with gold plates, its tail tied up in a knot fastened with a large gold knob set with jewels.[4]

The rapid journey of five days to Khelat, so briefly alluded to in Colley's letter to the Viceroy, had proved a very arduous undertaking. The heat was still fierce in the Sindhian desert, and the first stage of eighty miles across the blinding sands was a trying one. Horses had been posted at intervals of about fifteen miles, and the mouth of the Mullah Pass was reached by sunset. 'I did not feel the heat so much as I expected,' wrote Colley afterwards, 'but was made aware of it by my stirrup becoming so hot that it scorched and cracked the leather of my brown boots, and I had to keep shifting my foot.'

We had been variously allowed from six to ten days to do the journey in—one greybeard did, indeed, say it could be done in five days 'if we had Mahomed's winged horse'—but we did it easily in five days, the only difficulty being about our baggage. We had tents and bedding, but were never once able to use them on the march because they always arrived about four in the morning, just as we were preparing for our next march. . . .

Major Upperton was a very good travelling companion, always cheery and for pushing on. One place, however, tried us sorely. We had specially noted a place named Angera on our map—it was near the head of the pass, was printed in bigger letters than other places, and the name had a more civilised and Christian sound. Also we were met by letters saying that the Khan had recommended it for our halting-place, and that we should find supplies. Altogether we looked on it as a sort of haven, and the principal town of Baluchistan. We reached the last halt before it late in the

[4] Major Upperton's Journal.

afternoon, and found that our escort of Sindh horse, who were wonderfully good fellows, had made arrangements in case we should sleep there that night, but we scorned their offers and pushed forward for the comforts and luxuries of Angera. It soon got dark, and we lost our way over a wide desolate plain, and for several hours wandered, hunting fires which appeared and disappeared in the distance like will-o'-the-wisps. At last we made for one which was almost dying out, and found our escort, all sound asleep, sheltered as best they could against a bitter wind that was blowing over the plain, with their horses picketed round them and cowering; not a tree, house, or anything in sight—a picture of the most utter desolation imaginable.

We waked up the men. 'Where's Angera?' 'Here, sahib.' 'But where's the town?' There is none, sahib.' 'Where are the fig trees?' (Angera means 'place of figs.') 'There are none, sahib.' 'How do you know it is Angera?' 'They told us we should find the remains of a mud wall,' pointing to a bit of mud about two feet high. 'Then why is it called Angera?' 'Don't know, sahib. I suppose one day a man sat down here and called it Angera.' 'Where are the tents and provisions sent out for us by the officers?' 'At Schrab, sahib, fifteen miles further on.' 'And the supplies collected by the Khan?' 'Also at Schrab, I believe, sahib.' You may imagine the length of our countenances, having eaten nothing since breakfast. 'Can you give us anything to eat?' 'Here,' calling another man, 'get that meat that you have tied up in your handkerchief and cook it for the sahibs.' The poor fellows did their very best for us, insisting on giving up their blankets, and when they found the meat was too tough for us strongly recommended the gravy, a compound of hot ghee, red pepper, and garlic, which they said we should find very tasty. The intense ludicrousness of the whole thing quite carried the day, and we literally laughed ourselves to sleep. . . .

Next morning we pushed on early to Schrab, and there found a nice little camp and a breakfast that made up for our previous night's fast. We were met there, too, by an officer of the Khan's, who said he had been sent down ex-

pressly to see to our comfort, and who placed himself, his possessions, and his life absolutely at disposal. We inquired after the supplies which the Khan had directed should be collected for us, and with great pomp he called up one of his attendants, who proceeded to unwind a cloth from round his waist, all tied into knots and little bundles. From one corner of this he produced a handful of pistachio nuts, from another sugar plums, from a third some parched corn, from a fourth about an ounce of tea, and from a fifth a little sugar. These he proceeded to lay out with much ceremony in little heaps on a white cloth, and then asked us to sit down and eat.

When we were going away he expressed his strong affection and admiration for Major Upperton and desire to give him some memento, and begged his acceptance of a greyhound which was with him. Major Upperton tried to decline without hurting his feelings, and explained that we were travelling and would not know what to do with it, but the gentleman insisted, and the dog was sent with us, following apparently very willingly. When we got to the next station, where we changed horses and escort, the dog trotted up to one of the men who called it. Major Upperton asked him what he was doing with the dog. 'Oh,' said the man, 'that's my dog, it only went over to Schrab yesterday with one of my comrades!'[5]

Colley possessed a singular power of concealing sickness or suffering. In the light and laughable account of that day's adventures at Angera and Schrab the reader looks in vain for any trace of bodily suffering; but, turning to a journal kept by the Major Upperton so frequently mentioned, I find that during the ride that day Colley was taken very ill. 'He expressed his fear,' wrote Upperton, 'that he shouldn't be able to go on, and he begged me—as the mission was all-important—to take all papers and go on without him; but I was not going to leave him alone with

[5] Quetta, October 25, 1876, to Lady Lytton.

a couple of sowars in this bare inhospitable country. So I wrote a letter in Persian to the Wali, ten or twelve miles distant across the hills, to ask for a litter and camels. When the sowar returned with some riding camels, I got Colley on to one, and we went on slowly, as the least jolting caused him great pain.'

On October 27, Colley and his companion were back at Jacobabad, having returned from Khelat by Quetta and the Bolan Pass. Next day he writes to Lord Lytton:

I returned here late last night, and have already telegraphed the general result. I send herewith the Khan's reply to your letter and his remarks on the draft treaty. It was his own wish to sign the draft in token of 'his being the servant of Government, and only anxious to obey their wishes,' and thoroughly understanding its contents. . . .

Sandeman thinks the Khan not naturally vicious or cruel, and quite ready to obey our Government, which he is shrewd enough to see has both the power and the inclination to help him, and that his worst acts have arisen from avarice and suspicion and fear. I think this estimate a fairly correct one. The people certainly generally hate him, but I think it is rather on account of his want of kingly qualities than his actual oppression. I believe a good kingly ruler like some of our Plantagenets might oppress them ten times as much and yet remain popular. . . .

I found Sandeman nervously anxious about the position I should take up, and the Khan's vakil also watching very carefully to see our relative positions; so as I found Sandeman perfectly loyal and only too glad to learn your wishes, and as he referred every point to me that arose between himself and the Khan, I avoided all possible appearance of interference. At Sandeman's desire I handed the letter to him in Durbar to deliver to the Khan instead of delivering it direct myself; and when after the Durbar the Khan wanted to talk business I went out with the rest of the

officers. I hope you won't think that I went too far in this matter, but there seemed to me nothing to be gained by remaining, as every point was carefully discussed between Sandeman and myself before he saw the Khan, and again afterwards, and my presence could only have embarrassed him. Moreover, seeing there was an anxiety on the part of the Sindh officers to make out my arrival to be a snub to him, I made it a point to support him openly, and could not do so better than by myself publicly going out with the rest of the officers as a merely ornamental (?) part of the ceremony ! and leaving him to transact the business. . . .

Sandeman I think you will find much what you expect from his letters, argumentative but energetic, an enthusiast in his work, really anxious to carry out the wishes of his superiors, with a genuine sympathy for these rude races and their ways of thought, which enables him to listen patiently for hours to their grievances and thoroughly to enter into them, and a great deal of native shrewdness in dealing with them, as well as in escaping from many of his arbitration difficulties by making the people appear to settle them among themselves. He has, I think, done really good service in many ways, and is doing his best to shake up the Khan and his sirdars together, and re-establish a little confidence and friendship between them. . . .

He really appreciates your having written to him directly and fully as you did, and assured me many times that your letter and my visit were a greater relief to him than he could describe, and that my visit so far from weakening had very much strengthened his position with both Khan and sirdars. . . .

From Khelat I went to Mustung and Quetta to select in concert with him a camping ground for the troops, and thence along the Bolan Pass to Dadur and Mitri. With the exception of Kutchi and two or three fertile valleys such as those of Khelat, Mustung, and Quetta, the country may be described as one stony waste of mountain and plain. Quetta is by far the finest of these valleys. It is about twelve miles long by half that wide, enclosed by fine bold precipitous mountains, rising to over 10,000 feet, very

fertile, and well watered, both by a moderate-sized river and by mountain springs. A great part of it is now under cultivation, and with a little peace and management it will soon all be so, and it is dotted with villages, most of them surrounded with orchards of apricot, mulberry, apple, and other fruit trees, giving it a very refreshing look after the desolation of the plains around. After visiting it I am more strongly in favour than ever of making it the principal military station on all grounds—political, military, and sanitary. The people seemed delighted at the prospect of having our troops among them again. They all came crowding out to show us where the troops had been in former times, where the best water is, &c. . . .

The town itself is very much like Khelat on a smaller scale; indeed, the sketch enclosed of one of these towns would do for almost any. An outer mud wall with round towers and two or three gateways, enclosing a space of perhaps half a mile by one-third, covered by the town; and in the middle a steep mound rising a hundred feet or so, on which is built the Miri, a fortified palace, picturesque in outline and under certain effects, but hideous in colour, the whole town, walls, hill, and Miri being simply mud. I chose a site for the troops about three-quarters of a mile from the town, well watered, and fairly sheltered from the bitter north wind. With three companies in the Miri it would be unassailable except with artillery, and with a mountain gun or two added I believe all the armies of Central Asia could not take it, as it entirely commands an absolutely flat and shelterless plain for miles round. I think it might be worth while negotiating with the Khan for its purchase or occupation. . .

Thence I went down the Bolan Pass with Sandeman, and saw on the spot the arrangements made for its security. . . . Some hundred of the greatest villains of the neighbourhood are now paid to see the convoys safe through instead of plundering them, and by finding employment for headmen of various villages every scoundrel who could squeeze an oar in, in any raid, now gets a share of plunder without it. We were received by Alladina Kurd, the man immediately in charge of the pass—a noted scoundrel, a sort

of fat Rob Roy—covered with wounds, the plunderer *par excellence* of the pass, who admits that some of his happiest days were when he sat on the top of a rock with a long-range rifle, picking off the bullocks which were drawing the Khan's guns in the pass below, and now with a leer says he is growing thin from anxiety and care for the protection of the pass—he would make four ordinary men now. . . .

The Baluchs are a wild-looking lot, with their long curly hair worn hanging unkempt over their shoulders, their swords, knives, and little brass-studded buckler, and small active well-bred mares. But you cannot imagine a greater contrast than our friends Nabba and Jheend, with their handsome stately persons, picturesque costumes, and magnificent jewels, and the little Khan. It certainly will do him a deal of good to see the world and other chiefs besides himself, and I think Sandeman, though very anxious that he should go to Delhi, only half likes showing off his *protégé* in such company. The most picturesque scenes we had were at a concert at Mustung, where we sat out on a terrace of the Miri, round a great bonfire, with a circle of these wild-looking fellows round us, and a gang of minstrels, whose instrumental music was really very fair, though their vocal attempts were harsh and discordant; and who gave us a number of their national airs and songs till very late at night.

So ended the mission to Khelat—the first step in the advance of our outposts beyond the valley of the Indus. A letter written by Colley two years later, on the eve of the Afghan War, summarises the causes and the practical advantages of the measures adopted in Khelat:

The condition of affairs when we came out here was this: In Sindh Lord Northbrook had at last and most rightly, as I believe, broken through the non-intervention policy. Utter anarchy in Khelat, making itself felt on our own borders, had led to a series of raids and disturbances,

[6] Jacobabad, October 28, 1876, to Lord Lytton.

which practically left him the choice of one of three courses: either to submit to constant aggression and disturbance, or to march an army into Khelat, or to interfere in a more friendly way and endeavour to bring about peace in the country. He chose the last course, and just before we arrived Major Sandeman had started for Khelat as a friendly arbiter, but with a force of a thousand men at his back to give some weight to his arbitration. . . . I cannot understand how any one can suppose it possible to return to absolute non-intervention after such very active intervention as that of Sandeman's. Had Sandeman's force been withdrawn, the very instant they were out of the country the old disputes would have recommenced more bitterly than ever, and both sides would have cursed us, and with cause, for useless meddling.

We took a different line. We believed that an opportunity had presented itself of substituting a friendly, peaceful, and prosperous rule for the utter anarchy and devastation that had prevailed in Baluchistan for nearly twenty years, and at the same time of securing a position of enormous value strategically for the defence of our southern border. Militarily speaking, Quetta covers 500 miles of our Trans-Indus frontier from the sea to Dera Ghazi Khan.

The policy of the measure has been much disputed, and is, of course, a fair subject for discussion. Of its practical results, however, I can personally speak. During the three years preceding Sandeman's mission hardly a month passed without some raid on our borders, and the Bolan Pass was absolutely closed. During the two years following there has not been a single raid of any sort or kind. The Bolan Pass is perfectly safe, and has been traversed by thousands of caravans. . . . And the tableland of Baluchistan, which then could barely support Sandeman's small garrison of one thousand men, is now able to furnish without difficulty several months' supplies for the force of ten thousand men now being collected there. Were matters now in Baluchistan as they were when we came out, so far from being prepared to-morrow to commence our advance from Quetta into Afghanistan, we should still be collecting in the plain of Kutchi and

preparing for the difficult operation of forcing the Bolan Pass. I may add that not only have the Baluch sirdars enthusiastically supported Sandeman in all our complications with the Amir, and the Khan placed all his supplies at our disposal, but even the more distant ruler of Lus Beyla has just offered his army for service against the Amir if necessary.[7]

More than twenty years have passed since these events occurred. Frontier questions and forward policies are still in active dispute among us, but an element always present in old solutions of kindred problems, and unthought of only because of its certainty, has latterly been forcing itself into recognition as the real determining factor of the question. All these extensions of frontier, new areas of influence, additional responsibilities of empire—call them as we may, or prove their necessity as we like—remain fresh drafts drawn upon the home strength of the nation as it stands represented by its army. The bank which has to honour these cheques is the British soldier. Some thirty years ago, Carlyle, looking round upon his compatriots, declared he found only one honest man among them—the drill sergeant; his brother, the recruiting sergeant, seems to-day to be a still more important pillar of the State.

After two days of incessant writing at Jacobabad, Colley and his companion mounted horses again on October 30, and, following the frontier through Sindh and the Punjab, reached Peshawur on November 20, having ridden 800 miles in twenty-one days.

[7] November 20, 1878, to Colonel Brackenbury.

CHAPTER X

INDIA IN 1877

Rumours of war—Plan of campaign on the Oxus—The Delhi pageant—Pelly Conference—Merv and the Central Asian Question—Famine in Madras—Frontier disturbances—Discussion on frontier re-organisation—Home.

THE letters written by the Viceroy to his secretary during the period of the Khelat Mission are very touching evidences of how deeply he felt the untiring service that was given to him. On November 16 he wrote:

It is useless to take an epistolary shot at you on the wing, but I hope you will find this letter on your arrival at Peshawur. If so, let its first words be words of welcome to a place of rest—well won if brief. Cordial thanks for your wearisome labours of the last month, and grateful congratulations on their complete success. I fear that you have undergone many and severe hardships, severe even for such a seasoned soldier as yourself, although you make so light of them. Knowing your optimistic way of seeing and putting things, I read (*horresco referens!*) between the lines of your letters evidence of trials to the physical man beyond the imagination of the author of Job. *Mais il faut souffrir pour être beau*, and nothing could be more beau than the completeness of your diplomatic success.[1]

And then he proceeds to give his friend items of news from all parts of the world of politics. From London Lord Salisbury has started for the Conference

[1] From Lord Lytton.

at Constantinople, not sanguine of a pacific result, for talk must end when Russia asks the Porte for guarantees which will not be given. The Cabinet has made up its mind to fight, even single-handed, if Constantinople be menaced—but what will it consider a menace to Constantinople? Meanwhile they inquire from home what can be done to strike 'a rapid and effective blow at Russia,' and raise the Central Asian populations against her the moment war is declared.

Nothing could have emphasised more strongly the importance of a friendly Afghanistan. The nearest khanate was about 600 miles from our frontier. Between us and Bokhara lay some of the loftiest mountain passes and the wildest fighting tribes on the globe. And the blow suggested was to be a rapid and effective one! The letter proceeds to comment upon an official memorandum which

> admits that everything turns on Kabul, and that an Afghan alliance is essential to rapid operations, and yet extols the 'prudent policy of the last four years'! As regards Kabul, Sher Ali and his minister Nur Mohamed Shah have simultaneously been taken ill; I at first thought their illness a sham. Anyhow, they declare themselves too unwell to discuss or transact business, and thus our negotiations are still most vexatiously at a standstill. Meanwhile Kauffmann is concentrating carriage at Charjui for an early march on Merv, so I think we are likely to have hot work ere long.

All this, and more, is written in great haste at Mahdipur, where the Viceroy has arrived 'ten minutes ago after a delightful voyage down the Ravi River on mussocks [water-skins]. We are all well and happy, in spite of clouds on the political horizon.'

It was not a bed of roses, this position of Viceroy.

The frontier policy which had already divided Lord Lytton's Council could not always command the united support of the Indian Council at home. Famine was threatening Bombay and still more seriously Madras. An embarrassing agitation against the Imperial assemblage about to be held at Delhi had also sprung up in the Anglo-Indian press, the coming scarcity in Southern India being advanced as a reason for retrenchment. This great assemblage was only a month distant, but at any moment all its festivities and magnificence might be marred by the outbreak of hostilities. For while Colley was galloping along the frontier from Jacobabad to Peshawur, Lord Beaconsfield on November 9 made his celebrated Guildhall speech, and spoke of England being prepared not for a war of one campaign but of many. At this moment the nation was very near a declaration of war with Russia, the date was all but fixed, and in the plan of hostilities India was to play a most important part. A month later, however, the likelihood of immediate fighting seems to have passed away.

The intimate relations which eight months of close intercourse had developed between the Viceroy and Colley seemed to gather increased strength from the difficulties and dangers of the situation both in and out of India. Lord Lytton realised that, no matter what forces opposed his policy, or complicated its prosecution, he was always certain of finding in his military secretary a support as loyal as man could offer, and an amount of assistance possible only under the conditions of physical strength and mental power which Colley possessed in such rare combination. When he met the Viceroy at Peshawur in November,

he had ridden in thirty days from Khelat *via* Quetta and Jacobabad, a total distance of 1,100 miles. He had inspected all the frontier stations *en route*, had written valuable reports and letters, and had still sufficient vital energy left to frame a complete plan for action on the Oxus in the event of a declaration of war against Russia—showing in detail whence the force was to be drawn, how commanded, how organised; its strength, composition, transport, commissariat; its medical, ordnance, and engineer equipments: the number of extra officers required to raise native contingents beyond the frontier, the collection of supplies in front and in rear, the garrisons necessary for the line of communications, depôts, and camping-places—all thought out and minutely laid down. In reply to Lord Lytton's letter he had enclosed this paper and added:

As it seems to me that the Secretary of State may expect some more definite idea of what we can do, or propose to do, in the event of war being declared, . . . I venture to put in the enclosed. It seems to me equally necessary to make the preliminary preparations under any circumstances. If the Amir is friendly we can go ahead cheerily—if frightened into a doubtful neutrality we can go ahead carefully—if he declares against us we can halt and consider our position![2]

A letter home, however, shows that Colley realised the serious and difficult character of any such operations:

I must say I dread any military operations under our present *régime*. Beyond the ordinary flying column organisation which you may remember in India, there is nothing prepared.

. . . A memorandum written after the Abyssinian expedition, which treats the general transport as quite a secondary

[2] November, 1876.

and unimportant affair, is a curious illustration of how little the conditions of a distant expedition in a poor country are understood by men whose whole experience has been gained in a rich country abounding with supplies and transport. Fancy starting on an expedition to the Oxus depending on your regimental transport![3]

Work of a very different nature was now at hand. The great pageant at Delhi was to begin on December 23. The programme was not yet completed, there were innumerable details to be gone through; everybody was asking questions; and Colley's duties in connection with the preparations took him to Delhi.

A page taken from his daily notebook reads in strong contrast to the overleaf one, which has dealt with the proposed expedition to Central Asia. The items range from the size of sundry elephants to the height (four feet five inches) of a page for the ceremony! Nor are the children forgotten at this remarkable Christmas time; there is an entry, 'Christmas for children—conjurer.'

Then a serious hitch threatened. Somehow or other Sindia had invited the Viceroy to a banquet, and a false report got abroad that the invitation was accepted; the whole place was in an uproar—to single out Sindia thus for an honour not paid to any other prince or governor would be to 'throw a bombshell into the assemblage.' 'Excuse a scrawl,' writes Colley in finishing a letter on this and a dozen other subjects, 'but I have six men at a time waiting to speak to me.'

Last, but not least, his old friend the Khan of Khelat was begging a good deal on the strength of the invitation to Delhi. There was a demand for ele-

[3] Delhi, December 15, 1876, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

phants and camels for 'a hundred men for the Khan of Khelat.' On the day of the ceremony the feudatory princes attending the assemblage were given banners; the Khan, being regarded as an ally, did not receive this token of vassalage. 'Only give me a banner,' he cried, 'and I too will be a vassal.'[4] For all that he no doubt often wished himself at home again; and as we read in the old travel-stained notebook of the multifarious duties of the military secretary, an impression grows that he too might have been glad to exchange the brilliant scene at Delhi for even the dreariest bivouac in Baluchistan.

In the midst of these ceremonial preparations came a letter from Sir Garnet Wolseley full of warlike rumour:

> If a British force is sent to occupy these positions, I am afraid that I shall not be selected to command, but that some old gentleman will be given chief command. Of course you know that in any command I may obtain I expect you to play a very important *rôle*; so if the telegraph should at any time announce to you that I have been selected for any work, I shall expect you to join me, without any correspondence, forthwith. I should be very sorry to deprive Lord Lytton of your services, but in the event of an important war you could not be spared for your present duties in India.[5]

And Colley answers:

> Of course I am ready at any moment to rejoin my old chief in any possible capacity you think I can be of use —it was one of the conditions I made with Lord Lytton, and he knows that I mean it. It seems to me, however, that war is blowing over, for the present at least; but it is no use discussing things that will be decided long before you receive this. But it was a real pleasure to me to receive

[4] Life of Sir Robert Sandeman.
[5] October 25, 1876, from Sir Garnet Wolseley.

your reminder and think that you still wished to have me under you if anything turned up—and I hope I need not assure you that I am not ambitious as to position, but would gladly serve in *any* position under you where you thought me useful.

We are all hard at work at our Delhi preparations; the camp already looks very fine, and the whole thing promises to be really magnificent.[6]

From Delhi the Viceroy proceeded to Calcutta, but the change brought no respite to the secretary. On March 15, he wrote home an 'account of a day's work here,' and records a score of letters on every conceivable business written before he dressed at eight. He always made a practice of rising early and thus securing from two to three hours' work before breakfast. In India these morning hours were generally the only part of the day in which he could be free from incessant calls and interruptions, and it was upon those hours that he depended for his more serious work. On this recorded day which began at 5.30 A.M., he had been discussing State concerns till after twelve the night before. Amongst the miscellany of business, ranging from high affairs of policy to an interview ('rather a stormy one') with the viceregal confectioner, there are two entries of telegrams from Peshawur and long conversations thereon with his chief.

These telegrams referred to the conference then proceeding at Peshawur. The Amir, while declining to receive Lord Lytton's embassy and to attend the Delhi meeting, had sent an envoy, Syud Nur Mahomed, to meet Sir Lewis Pelly and discuss the means of improving the relations between the two

[6] Delhi, December 15, 1876, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

Governments. It was not the first visit of Nur Mahomed to India. In 1873, he had come as special envoy to Simla and urged a treaty of defensive alliance to which the Home Government would only authorise an ambiguous answer. The meeting at Peshawur had been agreed to by Lord Lytton conditionally on the acceptance by the Amir of a preliminary stipulation admitting British officers to reside as political agents in Afghanistan ; failing which the Government of India was not prepared to allow the conference to proceed. But the envoy announced himself to be without authority to negotiate on that basis. He, however, took the opportunity to review, in a sense unfavourable to us, the relations between his Government and ours during the past seven years.

At this time there was a prevalent expectation throughout Asia that the rupture imminent between the Sultan and the Czar would lead to war between England and Russia. But the Amir at Kabul continued to receive emissaries from the Russian Governor of Turkestan, and sought to inflame against us the fanaticism of the Mahomedan tribes.

Throughout the protracted discussions at Peshawur the Afghan envoy was suffering from a mortal complaint, and his death, on March 26, afforded the Viceroy an opportunity to close negotiations which had at least the result of removing all doubt as to the alienation and distrust our policy in recent years had developed in the Amir's mind.

Meanwhile in other parts of the world events of great importance were taking place. A formidable Russian army had been already collected for the passage of the Pruth, and in June 1877 it crossed the Danube and directed its advance towards the Balkans.

At first it seemed that the campaign was to be only a military promenade to Adrianople, but it was soon evident that there would be much fighting ere that point was reached by the invader.

Nowhere was the progress of the war watched with keener interest than at Simla by the Viceroy and his Council. At any moment it might afford us a chance, more favourable than we could expect again, of checking Russian advance in Central Asia. Up to this time the movement of Russia towards the Afghan frontier had followed two lines. From Orenburg she had reached the Oxus, while from the Caspian she had pushed along the Persian frontier to Kizil Arvat, menacing Merv, the last stronghold of the Tekhi Turkomans. Between these weak extended lines lay, as yet untraversed, the waterless wastes of the Kara Kum. In the separation and isolation of these two advances lay the weakness of the moment. But, given the necessary time, Russia was certain to connect her then desert-divided columns. Merv is a central point between the Hindu Kush and the Caspian. Its history and traditions have made it a notable landmark to Eastern peoples. It was the cradle of much of that strange and fierce eruptive power of the East which, under various dynasties, Ghaznavide, Seljukian, or Ottoman, had, from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, cast forth successive hordes to devastate the South and West. And though the glory of old Merv had long departed, and all the wide country round it, once the garden of the East, had changed into lone wastes where nomad tribes pitched their far-apart encampments by streams shrinking yearly into feebler currents—still, with a return of organised government and settled security,

much of the old fertility might reappear; and that fruitfulness which had once made Sogdiana a theme of praise to Eastern writers might cover again this long-neglected region. For the great features of the land are still the same. Three lofty ranges of snow-clad mountains hold it as in a frame. On the fourth side the seas of Aral and the Caspian partly fill the northern boundary. From these three mountain ranges two great rivers and many smaller streams descend into the lower plain; but their waters require the careful control of scientific labour, or else summer inundations and winter droughts must become destructive agencies of flood and famine. Should a civilised nation once reach the springheads of these streams, the plains of Central Asia might become again the seat of a populous empire, and the birthplace of the hardiest soldiers that had ever gone forth to the conquest of the world. At the present time Merv is a station on the railway from the Caspian to Samarkand. The two lines of Russian advance have long been united, but twenty years ago it seemed to the Indian authorities that if war broke out with Russia a blow might still be struck which would long postpone the junction, and roll indefinitely back the tide of Central Asian conquest.

The occupation of Kizil Arvat by Russia in 1877 drew the immediate attention of the Indian Government to Merv. And I find the subject dealt with in one of a collection of memoranda each of which bears the signature 'G. P. C.' That from which we take the following quotations reviews the whole field of Central Asian politics, forecasts the connection of the two lines of Russian advance, and points out the consequences that must gradually ensue to India.

At present, writes Colley in June 1877, the position of Russia in Central Asia

is dangerously weakened by the great gap which separates her eastern forces from the Caspian Sea and army of the Caucasus, her natural and formidable base for future operations in Central Asia. Hence her advanced posts on the Oxus, though within 800 miles of an excellent base, are still practically dependent on Orenburg, distant more than 1,800 miles; and the army of the Caucasus, with its trained soldiers and accumulated war material, can take no part in any operations undertaken by Russia in the khanates or towards Afghanistan. It may be assumed, therefore, that however peaceable the intentions of the Russian Government may be, and however genuine its assurances, its military commanders on the spot will continue to neglect no opportunity and spare no effort to push forward towards Merv, and secure a position that can enable them to connect their eastern with their western spheres of operation.

It is not, therefore, as an unexpected act of aggression, but as an important step in a long-foreseen and almost inevitable movement, that I view with anxiety the present Russian occupation of Kizil Arvat.

. . . . . .

The importance which the Government of India has at all times attached to Merv is greatly increased by the progress of events in Afghanistan. . . . The practical result of the inactivity policy for some time pursued is that during the last four years British influence has been steadily replaced by Russian influence at Kabul; and we can now no longer reckon on the prevalence of British interests at Herat as a counterpoise to the presence of Russian power at Merv.

. . . . . .

The danger we anticipate to India is not that arising from an adventurous Russian invasion. It is the far more serious danger involved in the extension of Russian influence over Afghanistan, till that State becomes a mere tool in the hands of Russia. If this happens, as ere long it must if not

averted by action on our part, then our Indian frontier armaments, instead of being calculated, as they now are, to resist mere mountain tribes without organisation or combined action, will have to be recast on a scale fit to cope with organised and combined attacks supported by European skill, arms, money, and possibly even troops. India itself will then become exposed to an influence rival and hostile to our own, and with all the prestige of success upon its side. Every passing cloud of disagreement in European politics will at once make itself felt throughout the length of our frontier, and send a thrill of hope to every discontented mind in India; and we shall be bound beyond escape to accept in a hopelessly unfavourable position the struggle for supremacy in the East whenever that struggle is forced upon us.

Later on he speaks of 'the re-establishment of friendly relations and of our due influence in Afghanistan' as 'the best solution of the problem.'[7] But a letter on the same subject to Sir Garnet Wolseley expresses grave doubts of any reconciliation being possible at that moment, although, when he first came out, he had 'believed in the sanguine hopes entertained of bringing the Amir round.' 'I think it so important,' he writes, 'that we should realise fully that we have no influence at present at Kabul; that the result of our long policy of "masterly inactivity" has been the absolute alienation of the Amir. . . . We should also realise how this affects our position in every detail.' In the same letter, referring to some military authorities who urged an immediate invasion of Afghanistan, he adds, 'I cannot go with them,' and in several paragraphs applicable chiefly to the

[7] In 1878 he wrote: 'What we had really to fear was the gradual establishment at Kabul, by friendly means and a policy more active than our own, of an influence hostile to us. This is precisely what has happened.'

situation of the moment he justifies his disagreement, concluding, 'Therefore I strongly deprecate an immediate invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.'

The final proposal of the despatch, for which Colley's note furnished some material, was that selected officers should be sent to Merv to gauge the strength and dispositions of the Turkoman tribes in relation to the Powers surrounding them—a proposal, however, which came to nothing. 'I am glad to say,' wrote Colley in August, 'the Russian retreat from Kizil Arvat has given us more breathing time, for I never expected the proposal to send officers to Merv would be sanctioned. Luck and the Turks combined seem likely to pull us out of a difficulty.'[8]

It is interesting to compare the decisions of Governments—changing often from day to day—affected as they almost inevitably must be by transient political incident, with carefully considered schemes built upon foundations lying well below the shifting surface of everyday occurrence. When the Merv despatch reached England, a change of estimate had taken place at home as to the offensive power of Russia. A dogged Turkish Pacha had suddenly broken in on the flank of the Russians between the Danube and the Balkans, and, squatting down at an obscure town called Plevna, had so burrowed and battened all the ridges and villages around that every attempt to dislodge him had failed. It was one of those events in war which are the surprises of that great game of chance. It afforded no measure of the real power of Russia, or even of the relative strength of the rival combatants in this war, but it was hailed in England as proof that the power of Russia for

[8] August 29, 1877, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

offensive warfare was delusive, and that her whole military administration was a sham. A few months earlier, English statesmen were spending sleepless nights in prospect of Russia sweeping down upon Constantinople; they were ready to go to war in Central Asia at the mere mention of the passage of the Pruth. But now this temporary Turkish triumph at Plevna had turned the current of their fervour, and Russian armaments began to be rated as low as before their power had been exaggerated. The Merv despatch was judged accordingly to be a 'nightmare,' and its conclusions to be fabrics elaborately raised on a foundation of imaginary danger which had vanished even while it was being built.

Almost at the time that the Merv despatch had drawn forth this somewhat sarcastic reply, and that Ministers were speaking of the complete collapse of Russia as a great military Power, an officer then holding an official position in London wrote to Colley as follows:

> We expect to hear of Plevna capitulating before long—at least all the Russian papers declare that it will soon be starved out. It is a curious fact that the vast majority of the people here in England, down to the lowest classes, are all for the Turks, and very anti-Russian; and yet the Government, which theoretically represents the majority of the people, are *afraid* to make a stand for what they know to be British interests of great magnitude—namely, the preclusion of ships of war from the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.
>
> What a collection of cowards and ignorants the next generation will vote us when they find themselves obliged to fight at a vast disadvantage for what we might have secured easily, perhaps even without war at all, had we had the courage to say to these accursed Tartars from the North,

'If you cross the Pruth, we shall declare war with you'! Oh for the days of Pitt, or even of Palmerston![9]

All this was more than twenty years ago, and I will here give from a journal of to-day the following account by a recent traveller in Central Asia of Russian progress and intentions in that part of the world:

The lecturer said they could not but yield a tribute of praise to the firm, humane, and consistent policy which, within a few years, had introduced complete order and security into the wilds of Central Asia; to the masterly statesmanship which had changed warlike tribes and the fanatical town populations into peaceful subjects of the Great White Czar; and to the steady and well-directed enterprise which was gradually extending to these regions the blessings of science and civilisation. Referring to the possibilities of a Russian advance on India, the lecturer said he had taken great pains to elicit official and private opinion. He had come to the conclusion that the Russians regarded this conquest of India as quite feasible. They had also a strong conviction that all Asia must eventually fall under their influence. This conviction was based partly on the success which had hitherto attended their arms in Asia.

From the days of Alexander to those of Napoleon, the conquest of India had been the dream of every great world conqueror. Since the rise of Islam, it had been the aim of successive Mohammedan tribes who won for themselves the supremacy of Central Asia. The Russians regarded themselves as the legitimate successors of those Central Asian conquerors, and, reasoning that what had been accomplished so often before by Arabs, Afghans, Mongols, Persians, could be accomplished again, they had come to look on India as their goal.

There can indeed be little doubt as to the accuracy

[9] November 15, 1877, from Sir Garnet Wolseley.

of the forecast of Russian movement which actuated the frontier policy of that time.

In the midst of these far-reaching projects, there came a rude reminder from Southern India that the feet of the great Imperial idol were but of clay. A second monsoon had failed, drought had followed drought, and famine had overspread famine. In the streets of Madras, in the mud hovels of inland villages, in the forests whither they had wandered to live on roots and leaves, along the ghauts and the dusty tracks, the dead—skeletons before they died—lay thick upon the land. A million of people were on the relief works. Another million were receiving subsistence allowance. The deaths recorded from starvation in a month were 120,000, and perhaps as many more had dropped where no human record could number their bodies.

> The Madras famine is reaching such dimensions that I think it almost certain we shall have to go down there at once. It is the very hottest time of the year, and the trip will be a trying one—not to me, for, so far as I have yet had the opportunity of judging, I am supremely indifferent to heat—but to the Viceroy. But, as he himself feels most strongly, affairs have got to that state that personal considerations ought not to affect him for a minute.[1]

On August 16 the Viceroy, accompanied by his Famine Minister and other high officials, left Simla for Madras. The Duke of Buckingham, then Governor of the southern presidency, met the viceregal party at Raichore, and on August 29 the Governor-General entered the city of Madras in great state.

The next three weeks were spent in Madras and

[1] August 5, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

Mysore, and on September 21 the Viceroy started on his return to Simla. His visit had undoubtedly been of great benefit; a better organisation had been introduced into the famine administration; and, above all human assistance in this fight against Nature, had come Nature herself to the rescue. Copious rains had fallen south of the Godavery, and when the viceregal party recrossed the boundary of the Madras Presidency the first signs of returning vegetation were beginning to show themselves over the desolate land. Colley's letters give some idea of Lord Lytton's embarrassments at this time.

You may have seen a good deal of discussion in the English papers as to Lord Lytton's action at Madras. It was a difficult problem to deal with in many ways, but I believe that the result of his visit was not only an immense financial saving—that can be proved in black and white—but a great saving of life and strengthening of the hands of the local officers in dealing with the famine; at least I frequently get letters to that effect from officers on the spot. The 'Times,' as regards Indian matters, is in the hands of a school which Lord Lytton has been attacking, and consequently is bitterly opposed to him, and I expect that to the end of the chapter they will abuse everything he does. But if he is able to see out his Viceroyalty, I shall be very glad to let his work be judged by results; the only thing I fear is any accident removing him while everything is still in a transitional state and cannot be fairly tested.

I have had a very fair allowance of travelling. I had got as far as Umballa on our way home from Madras when I was sent on without a day's rest to Peshawur and the North-Western Frontier, in consequence of the unsatisfactory state of affairs there, to meet and confer with Sir Richard Pollock and the frontier generals, and visit the disturbed parts.[2]

[2] Simla, October 22, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

For some months raids on the frontier of the Punjab had been more than usually prevalent. He writes on this subject to Sir Garnet Wolseley:

The present Punjab system seems to be, not to attempt seriously to stop raids, but, as soon as they mount up, to punish them by 'punitive expeditions' which burn a few villages and generally suffer more loss than they inflict. The system the Viceroy wishes to work is to improve the frontier defence, so as to punish raids when attempted, and put a stop to them, and so to punitive expeditions generally; but if expeditions are unavoidable, then to make them telling; not attacking unless a fair chance offers of surprise and of bringing their fighting force to bay.[3]

In another letter on the same subject, I find mention of a name destined soon to become prominent in frontier matters, and later on to be the central figure in a great tragedy:

I am not the least disposed to run down the Punjab: I think it has produced some admirable men, and great results. But I cannot admit it has the perfect frontier organisation they try to make out.

A very good illustration of the old school which has held sway here, and the new school which Lord Lytton is trying to encourage, is to be found in two proposals for a military expedition to punish a small section of a tribe, and one village in particular, for an outrage lately committed. Cavagnari, the deputy commissioner, a man whom Lord Lytton has rather brought forward lately and quite one of the best frontier officers we have, proposes to make a forced march of about thirty miles with a picked force (principally cavalry and mountain artillery), get *behind* the village before daylight, surround it or attack it from the rear, and capture all the men, and be off before any general alarm is given. X. and Y., both old frontier officers, propose to assemble a much larger force and attack the village *in front*—because they

[3] September 5, 1877.

say the ground there is favourable. Of course, as soon as the fighting men in the village think they have had enough, they quietly slip out behind and leave us the proud possessors of a lot of empty stone-huts.

The tribes are getting very troublesome and I think will soon oblige us to give them some severe lessons—though one would rather wait till our relations with the Amir are better defined.[4]

What with conflicting authorities within the frontier and pressure from the tribes without it, a reorganisation of frontier administration had for some time seemed desirable. To promote this object, and in immediate reference to a Jowaki disturbance which the local authorities had not succeeded in suppressing, Lord Lytton despatched Colley on September 23 to Peshawur, which place he reached on the 28th. To Peshawur also had come the various officials in authority on the frontier—the commissioner, the commandant of the Punjab Frontier Force, the general commanding the Peshawur district, and Major Cavagnari, the deputy commissioner. A long conference took place on the 29th; writing an account of it to Lord Lytton, Colley, after describing his own proposals for dealing with the Jowakis, continues:

I expounded your general views on punitive measures—viz., a strong dislike to the usual 'British raid' and village burning; a desire to see such effective measures of defence taken as would in the long run secure prompt punishment overtaking raiders, and thus often avoid the necessity of any other punitive measures; and a determination not to let troops run in and run out again of the hills, fired at as they retire. I said you would rather hold a mile only, but hold it till the tribes admitted their inability to turn you out and gave in, than penetrate twenty miles but have to run out again.

[4] August 29, 1877, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

They all accepted the principle that the occupation of a point in tribal territory which the tribes cannot turn you out of, but feel bound in honour to attack, is not only the severest punishment to their pride, but is the most likely way of inflicting loss on their fighting men. The proposed operations against the Jowakis are based upon this.

. . . Broadly, Cavagnari is thoroughly with you. Letters which I have seen show me how thoroughly he has grasped every principle. His only failing, perhaps, is that he is a little disposed to be too enterprising and vigorous.[5]

The conference resulted in a general acceptance of these views—'in favour,' as Colley expressed it, 'of the short clutch and tight hold, as against the long reach and run home.' We can trace the results and practical value of the measures he recommended later on, when we read of 'the satisfactory termination of the Jowaki business and the successful result of Cavagnari's surprise movement on Sapri;'[6] and again, 'Another most successful surprise expedition of Cavagnari's has now satisfactorily disposed of the Utman Khel affair.'[7] A letter from Colley congratulating Cavagnari on these successes is interesting for many reasons.

Late as it is, I must ask leave to send my most hearty congratulations on the brilliant success of your two surprises. It is not often a man has the opportunity and the luck to be able to give effect so thoroughly to his views—to justify by practical experience the opinions he has maintained against much opposition. And I do most sincerely hope that you have given them a lesson in irregular warfare which was badly wanted, and by which I trust they will profit.

What you say about the breech-loader and its influence on the trans-frontier tribes was also very interesting to me,

[5] Kohat, October, 1877, to Lord Lytton.

[6] Calcutta, March 1, 1878, from Lord Lytton.

[7] Calcutta, March 26, 1878.

and I cannot tell you what a satisfaction it is to me to find that my somewhat theoretical views and your practical experience tend exactly in the same direction. As regards any views I may have expressed, I have already heard many things put down to me which I did not say, and I certainly never said that I could take 500 men anywhere through the Afridi country. What I did say, and what I am inclined to maintain, is that 500 men is as large a force as can be usefully employed in one column in such rugged country; that is to say, that with a total force of 2,000 men or more, I would break them up into small columns; that 500 men with breech-loaders could ordinarily overcome any opposition they would meet with, and, indeed, would be as many as could be brought profitably into action on one spot; and, in any case, could hold their ground till relieved by other columns. Would not your experience go with me in this?

I cannot help laughing now when I recall all the impossibilities we were told of—impossible to get the guides across that rugged country at night—impossible to get past the villages without being discovered, and intimation sent of your movements—impossible to surprise the village itself.

I agree most heartily in all you say about the gain of proving how little formidable this great Afridi bugbear really is, and how little cohesion there is among their tribes. Of course every one knows that to occupy by sheer force of arms a considerable tract of mountainous country occupied by wild fighting tribes is a troublesome business, and takes a good many men, and is a thankless task at best; but I am in hopes that among the younger men your views, illustrated as they are by practice, will gain ground, and that we shall soon see growing up a school of men who take the Afridi for what he is, not for an ideal warrior gifted with supernatural intelligence and valour; and who realise the advantages that superior arms, discipline, power of combination, and boundless resources give us.[8]

[8] June 4, 1878, to Major Cavagnari.

Here are Cavagnari's remarks in reply (June 1878): 'Your ideas about using troops in small detached bodies for mountain warfare are

These opinions are of even greater interest at the present time than when they were written. The possession of modern arms by the Afridis and other hillmen has changed many of the conditions of superiority we then had over these frontier tribes. But although that greater equality of weapon would probably affect the estimate as to numbers, it may be doubted whether it would modify the general tactical methods of mountain warfare above expressed.

A memorandum of Colley's upon the whole question of frontier reorganisation shows that the point really at issue was how circumlocution could be avoided, and the frontier policy, internal and external, from Kashmir to Kurachi, directed with a view

> to Imperial rather than local interests, and in the closest possible accord with the foreign policy of the home Government.
>
> . . . I think that a full consideration of the subject can lead to no other conclusion but that if our frontier policy is to have the required unity and vigour it should be placed in the hands of a specially chosen political agent, not the servant of a provincial Government, but communicating direct with the Governor-General.[9]

He develops in detail the new scheme, and writes with regard to the status and powers of the proposed agent, 'Seeing how closely allied our relations with Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and Kashmir are, all governed by the great Russian question, it seems that these relations should be concentrated in his hands.'

quite in accordance with those I have formed from what I have seen since I have been on this frontier. I have not yet seen the ground where more than 500 good light infantry men could work at any one object with advantage, and I was present once during a disaster where the pushing forward of more men than the nature of the ground justified was not only a positive disadvantage, but was a blunder.'

[9] Paper on Frontier Policy, 1877.

The border district was to be in the main a Trans-Indus district, but excluding Kurachi; Peshawur the headquarters, Baluchistan and Kashmir the wings; all the frontier troops to be under one command. This able document concludes:

> At present, supposing the Commandant at Kohat to desire the support of a couple of heavy guns from the batteries at Peshawur (as has recently been proposed), the course of procedure, supposing all parties to be at headquarters, is as follows. The Commandant at Kohat (40 miles from Peshawur) writes to the Commandant of the Punjab Frontier Force at Abbotabad (100 miles the other side of Peshawur), who writes to the Military Secretary Punjab Government at Lahore; who sends it to the Military Department Government of India at Calcutta; who refers it to the Commander-in-Chief; who sends it to the General commanding at Peshawur; who returns it to the Commander-in-Chief with his remarks. And so, having *four* times travelled from one end of India to the other, the answer ultimately reaches Kohat!

Little wonder if the attempt of the Viceroy to run a straight line through all these complicated arrangements should have aroused numerous objections. The proposed frontier reforms necessarily touched many interests. Few men, however, possessed more tactful power of reducing friction to a minimum than Colley. The quiet enthusiasm of his nature, the absence of all self-seeking or aggressive personal assertion, inspired feelings of respect, often of personal attachment, and went far to smooth difficulties. All had gone well at Peshawur. The frontier officers and he had parted in mutual friendliness and esteem. Writing of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, he says:

> I may mention that I have been much struck with

Egerton's loyalty. . . . He has done his very best to further what he believed to be the wishes of the Government, and I cannot but attribute the thoroughly friendly way in which my mission has been received to the tone he has taken in the matter.[1]

Leaving Peshawur when the conference was finished, Colley proceeded to Kohat, riding through the celebrated pass, that scene of so much border warfare since the days of the Sikh war; and thence, following the line blockading the Jowaki tribe, by the Swat frontier to Marden, and back to Simla on October 11.

About this time the correspondence contains allusions to Colley's acceptance of the private secretaryship, the principal post on the staff of the Governor-General:

Your letter interrupted me in the midst of a voluminous report on the Punjab Frontier tribes and our dealings with them, and furnishes materials for a letter almost as long if I had time to write it. I am not going home after all—at least, not for good. The Staff College was offered me; at least, I might have had it had I wished. But I have accepted the private secretaryship, and remain out here as long as Lord Lytton does. The private secretaryship to the Viceroy is a different appointment from ordinary private secretaryships, even to Cabinet Ministers, as you may suppose from the fact that the salary used to be 5,000*l.* a year, and even now, though reduced (through the fall of the rupee), is about 3,000*l.* a year. It is, in fact, a recognised position of considerable power and influence, and full of very interesting, though very hard, work. But I still hope to run home for a few weeks before settling down in my new appointment, and hope to be in England about the middle of January.[2]

Early in November the Viceroy travelled from Simla to Mussorie, a mountain march between the

[1] Kohat, October 1, 1877, to Lord Lytton.
[2] Simla, October 22, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

sources of the Ganges and the Jumna; on one side the snow-clad Himalayas, and on the other the great Indian plain. Calcutta was reached early in December, and then, after a couple of very busy weeks spent in clearing off all official work, Colley started on a short leave of absence to England. Just before sailing, news reached him of trouble among his old Kaffir tribes on the Bashee River. A quarter of a century had gone by since the last Kaffir war. But a new hand was now on the helm, and already the ship was beginning to move uneasily in the rising gale. Sir Bartle Frere, sent to the Cape in the previous March as Governor and High Commissioner, decreed that henceforth 'there was to be no clan, no chieftain,' in South Africa. One single political interest must rule from the Zambesi to the Cape of Storms. The annexation of the Transvaal on April 12, 1877, had been followed by that of Kaffraria. The Idutsha reserve where Colley had spent so much of his early service was included in these annexations, and so, by a strange coincidence, a brawl upon the Bashee River set spark to a series of South African wars, including the overthrow of the Zulu power, and thus indirectly leading to the tragedy of Majuba Hill.

Late in December Colley left India on a three months' leave of absence. He had a busy and varied programme to carry out; high officials to be interviewed, questions of policy to be discussed with that freedom of remark and admission of object difficult save by word of mouth.

And in his personal life he was about to take an important step. 'If you feel writing inclined,' he had written to a lady with whom he had long corresponded,

'a letter to me at Aden (of course, not in the Viceroy's bag) would help very pleasantly to carry me through the Red Sea.'[3] A few months later he would return to India through the Red Sea—with his wife, the writer of the letter to Aden.

[3] Simla, October 22, 1877, to Miss Hamilton.

CHAPTER XI

THE AFGHAN CRISIS

Political interviews—Marriage—Letters from Lord Lytton—Return to India—Indian troops to Malta—Russian Mission to Kabul—Correspondence with Cavagnari—Sir Neville Chamberlain's Embassy—War with Afghanistan.

In a letter to Lady Lytton from Madras, and with reference to his new appointment, Colley wrote:

> You know what the army has been and is to me. I have often said it answered the place of a wife to me. I can always, and under all circumstances, fall back on it, and feel sure of finding interest and comfort in devoting myself to it—and it has always treated me so well![1]

Four months had elapsed. The private secretaryship had been accepted on condition of freedom in the event of war,[2] and war was a contingency which in the political situation then existing might at any moment arise; nevertheless, the idea that the army was enough for a soldier, that it filled the place of wife and home, did not long survive in Colley's mind; for there can be little doubt that, although he left India on this short leave of absence not actually engaged to the lady who was soon to become his wife, he had pretty well determined that it would not

[1] August 19, 1877, to Lady Lytton.

[2] In September he had written to Sir Garnet Wolseley: 'I have made the same conditions as before—to be free to leave for any active service, or if you want me.'

be his fault if he did not return to India as a married man. The letter he had asked for met him at Aden, and on the last day of the year he wrote again—a long letter written in the unwonted leisure of the sea voyage, and touching on matters of 'inner thought,' as he called them, matters usually absent even from his most intimate correspondence. An earlier letter from his friend had been answered in India somewhat hurriedly—

> Because I felt that if I let my mind run wild, and launched out on the interesting questions, my poor work would go to the bad, at a time when I was particularly hard pressed, so I brought your letter on board ship with me to answer when I was sure of time.

He then passes on to the questions of inner thought referred to above.

> The universal adaptability of religion to all minds. To the lowest order of minds it presents itself in the form of fear—fear of 'divine revenge,' in this world it may be, or at any rate future punishment. To others it presents itself in the form of obedience. To others in the form of love—that is the essence of Christ's teaching. To others in the form of widened sympathy, the 'enthusiasm of humanity,' also a large element in Christ's teaching, now rather taken up by the freethinkers and positivists. To others in the form of duty, often hard and stern. To others in the form of the highest æsthetic culture. To others, as to you, in the form of a passionate faith in, and devotion to, good; a desire to do right for right's sake. I think religion contains all these, and through one or other of them it comes within the reach of every mind.
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> . . . It has often been an interesting study to me to observe how the different aspects of religion are brought forward in different teachings. Christ's was essentially love—love towards one another, or widened sympathy, and a more reverential love towards God; and His death introduced an

additional element of love—passionate love to Himself. You must have met many men, as I have, whose whole religion consists of this passionate love to Christ. Every act is good or bad according as it will be pleasing or displeasing to Him, cause Him pleasure or pain. Love was the special character of His teaching, its essence and power, and as far as I know it had never been so put forward before. . . .

. . . But one might go on for ever tracing out the various forms in which religion and goodness appeal, and why different forms have had most power at different times. All may be abused as well as used.

. . . But I believe, in the main, religious earnestness, earnestness in good, does good in whatever form it shows itself. X. . . . stared in astonishment to hear me defend Moody and Sankey against a number of ridiculers, and say that I believed them to be honest, really good men, and doing a great deal of good. But I would equally have defended an earnest disbeliever against Moody and Sankey's sweeping condemnations.

It may be want of imagination and the practical turn of my mind, or it may be that as a youngster I so hopelessly bewildered my mind over these sort of questions, but I feel no particular curiosity to solve the problems of the unknowable, nor that indignant impatience which I think it is Hume expresses: 'We go through the world asking questions to which we are vouchsafed no reply. . . .'

At the end of this long letter, written on the voyage home, comes the following sentence:

We are due in England about January 13, and I expect to be in Ireland about the end of January; and having risked one snubbing with this letter I shall probably risk another by taking the opportunity of a visit to Glenmalyre to pay you one, unless the result of this venture is such as to discourage another![3]

The result of the venture must have been en-

[3] London, 1878, to Miss Hamilton.

couraging, for writing again from London he says, 'I hope to be in Ireland at the end of next week. I hope you will not be away just then.' And then he goes on to analyse the mental effect which the last two years of arduous work in India had had upon him:

. . . When I met you, only just entering on womanhood, my mind was naturally far ahead, and I had travelled over most of the country you were just entering on, and could tell you a good deal about it. Now in many directions you have caught me up, probably passed me, and that mind which then struck you as big will now seem dwarfed, just as the house and rooms which seem so large to us in our childhood do when we see them again after we are grown up.

In practical thought, dealing with business and great administrative questions, my mind probably has developed; at any rate my confidence in myself has. But I doubt whether I could take as thoughtful a view of a purely intellectual work as I could have done some years ago.

As regards practical work, I may tell you privately that I heard yesterday I had been urged upon the Colonial Office from two different directions as 'the one man' to be sent out to the Cape now, to take command of all the forces being collected there, and stop or quell the Kaffir insurrection, which threatens to assume very formidable dimensions. Lord Carnarvon, I believe, was very favourable to the idea, but the . . . were furious at the thought of a junior colonel being suggested for an appointment always held by a lieutenant-general![4]

In the few weeks following arrival in England, his life was an incessant round of interviews with men whose place among the political leaders of a time which has now become almost historic adds interest to the following sketches:

I have been doing a good deal of business and talking since my arrival. . . . I have seen Lords Northbrook and

[4] London, 1878, to Miss Hamilton.

G. Hamilton, Sir Louis Mallet, and other Indian authorities, and am to see Lord Halifax to-morrow, and dine with Lord Northbrook to meet the Duke of Argyll next week. Nothing can exceed Lord Northbrook's kindness, both to myself personally and in his desire to give every assistance he can to H.E., and save him from troublesome Parliamentary interference and opposition.

My interview with Lord Salisbury went off very satisfactorily on Friday last. He was very pleasant and courteous, and a little more communicative and less purely official than last time. It is a very pleasant face to talk to, there is such a quick intelligence in it, and response, especially to any touch of humour.

And now to my personal matters. I am sending off a telegram to-day announcing my approaching marriage, and asking to be allowed to delay going to India till you reach Simla about the end of April. I feel very much ashamed of asking this, but I hope you and H.E. will pardon me; we could not well arrange matters earlier. The lady's name is Edith Hamilton, daughter of General Hamilton. We propose to be married about the 20th, travel out leisurely, spending perhaps a week in Italy and another in Egypt, and reach India towards the end of April.

She is staying here now with us, and has got over the first formidable introductions. It was not, however, so formidable as might be, as her family on both sides are Irish, and not far from our part of Ireland, and so we have numerous friends and distant connections in common. What she really fears is the Simla introductions!

. . . She complains rather that every one thinks it necessary to impress on her that she is such a fortunate person, and, of course, every letter of congratulation in which that idea is expressed I give her to read—but she bears it meekly, and accepts her fate as a 'fortunate person'![5]

On March 14, in the little country church of Leix, in Queen's County, George Pomeroy-Colley

[5] London, 1878, to Lady Lytton.

was married to Edith Althea Hamilton.[6] During all these weeks war appeared imminent, and Colley's post in the event of a campaign had been already determined.

Throughout the period of his leave of absence Colley received by every mail from India letters from the Viceroy, written in terms of close and intimate friendship and affection such as can but rarely exist between men whose relations in life are those of Governor-General and secretary. I will quote one or two extracts from these letters, giving something of that peculiar charm of expression and manner which made the writer so beloved by those who came in close contact with him. Another memorial of this friendship is found in the inscription written by Lord Lytton in a copy of his poems, 'Fables in Song,' which he had given Colley a few months earlier on his birthday.

Brave and wise friend! The day that gave you birth
Gave you a nobler birthday gift thereby
Than I can give you; since it gave the worth
All honour in you, and none more than I.
But take my birthday gift—these songs; and give
Song leave to link the future to the past,
Bidding our friendship thro' our lifetime live,
Bequeathed to each new birthday by the last.

LYTTON.

SIMLA: *November* 1, 1877.

Barrackpore: February 22, 1878.

DEAREST COLLEY,—I cannot sufficiently thank you for your exceedingly interesting and instructive letter of January 25. . . . As if this letter ever reaches you at all it will reach

[6] Her father, General Meade Hamilton, C.B., belonged to that branch of the Irish Hamiltons of whom James Hamilton, 1st Viscount Clandeboye, was the original representative. General Hamilton's wife was the daughter of Sir Erasmus Dixon Borrowes, of Gilltown, 9th Baronet.

you at Aden, on your way back to India, I may now tell you, without fear of my motive being misinterpreted, how terribly I have missed, and continue to miss you, my dear Colley. No one can replace to me in the slightest degree the strength I derive from your assistance, or the comfort of your friendly and helpful presence at my right hand. I have passed the last two months in a mental and moral condition of profound discouragement, and constant dread lest the warlike turn of affairs at home might drift you irrevocably away from me. But till now I have endeavoured to repress the confession of such feelings in my letters to you, lest you should attribute them to a selfish indifference to your professional interests, which, believe me, are quite as dear to me as my own.

I am full of curiosity about your visit to Knebworth. I fear the place will have looked greatly to its disadvantage in this season. It is so essentially a summer place; you should see it when the gardens, in full bloom, are like sheets of blazing colours—when the trees in the park are in leaf.

God bless you, dear friend. How glad I shall be when you return to your affectionate

LYTTON.

Calcutta: March 1, 1878.

I am rejoiced by the good news of your matrimonial engagement, the details of which have not yet reached us. I think it took everybody by surprise except myself, who had a lurking suspicion when you went home that something of this kind might 'come off' before you returned. I am thoroughly glad that you have come over to the matrimonial side of the social frontier, on which I have myself been so long established, for three reasons, two of which are purely selfish. First, because I hope that having now 'given hostages to fortune' your 'wandering and extravagant spirit' will be less adventurous, less locomotive, more disposed to fix its habitat for a while in India, where warm and grateful friends await your return, and less attracted by those distant trumpet calls which still threaten me every day with the irreparable loss of your assistance in my ever anxious task out here. Secondly, because I feel sure that *your* wife will

be a great resource to *my* wife; and last, though really not least, because whatever makes you happy makes me happy. The longer I live on into an age with which I find myself sadly out of harmony, an age whose tastes, hopes, and beliefs I do not share, and whose political proceedings fill me with disgust, the more my sources of personal happiness concentrate themselves in every form of happiness to my personal friends which does not involve the loss of their friendship or the interruption of my relations with them. . . .

I hope you will be able at least to return to India at the time indicated in your telegram. Afterwards, if there be a great European war, you know of course that you will always be free to 'go where glory waits you.' But if we *do* go to war with Russia, who can say whether there may not be an Indian campaign as important as the European one?[7]

Plevna had fallen in December. By the end of January 1878, Russia had taken Adrianople, Turkey was prostrate, and the Russo-Turkish war was practically at an end. It was at this time that anti-Russian excitement in London reached its height, but Lord Lytton did not miscalculate its strength when, writing to Colley after the news that a mob had broken Mr. Gladstone's windows, he said: 'I don't think the great heart of the English people is likely to do more than break windows just at present, and therefore I still hope to see you back amongst us ere long.'[8]

Then came armistice, treaty of San Stefano, Congress. 'In spite of all the warlike news,' wrote Lord Lytton to Colley, 'I still disbelieve in war on our part till after the Congress, if it comes off, and then God knows what may happen. The Congress is an egg which may be hatched into any number of cockatrices.' The Viceroy was right. The fighting

[7] From Lord Lytton. [8] Barrackpore, February 10, 1878.

hour had passed. Turkey was for the moment crushed; a result had been reached of greater future consequence than could easily be estimated at the moment. When Server Pacha declared at the peace negotiations that in future Turkey would be the ally of Russia, he opened a new phase of the Eastern question. On the very day that Lord Lytton was expressing his opinion to Colley that the great heart of the English people would not rise above the level of window-breaking, the Turkish envoy was practically saying to the Russian peace negotiators: 'Better the Russian enemy than the English friend.' The convention of Cyprus and the occupation of Egypt soon gave point in Turkish eyes to Server Pacha's prophecy.

Colley started for India full of the political issues then uppermost in men's minds at home. At Rome, on the outward journey, he takes a final look at the shifting field of diplomatic struggle:

Sir A. Paget gave me Lord Salisbury's circular despatch to read. It certainly is a clear and admirably written State paper, but seems to me to fail, as all our policy has failed, in not indicating a shadow of a definite view or line of action on our part. Personally I am an utter disbeliever in the possibility of propping up the Turk. I believe the attempt to do so can only lead to a series of failures and apparent humiliations on our part; but whether our idea is to attempt this, or to create a strong Bulgaria under European instead of Russian tutelage, or to take up Greece, or to secure certain 'material guarantees' for ourselves, and let Russia and Austria settle matters afterwards as they like, I cannot gather. I am glad to see the Greeks being apparently taken up, because that, at least, is a definite and intelligible policy, and one in which the Government could count on general sympathy from both sides at home. One is equally curious as to what our military policy is to be. . . .

Whether we go to war or not, we shall have acquired some very useful experiences in our preparations, and especially in calling out the reserves; and I do hope that measure will be carried through at any rate.[9]

Diplomacy had now a busily pretentious time of it, and though opportunity for fighting was unlikely to recur, it was under considerable preparation for war that the Congress of Berlin opened. India was to have her share in the show of military activity. When Colley reached Bombay at the end of April 1878, the order to send Indian troops to Malta had just been received, ships were being hastily engaged, the war excitement was again to all appearance running high. 'It is useless speculating on anything,' Colley wrote, 'with this uncertainty of war still hanging over. I am beginning to believe the strain will go on for ever.' The move of the Indian troops into the basin of the Mediterranean was an intimation to Russia that strife between her and England meant war with English Mohammedanism in Asia too. The hint was readily taken. It was Eastertide when the news came that Indian troops were to be moved to Malta, and now, in July 1878, about two months following their departure from Bombay, all India rang with the tidings that a Russian mission had entered Kabul.

Yet perhaps few moments during the past two years of political anxiety had held less real danger of hostility between England and Russia than the time of the Berlin Congress. A secret agreement already existed between Russia and England, before the Congress met, defining exactly the chief points in dispute.

[9] Rome, April 6, 1878, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

To Indian officials, from the Viceroy downwards, the next few months were full indeed of business and anxiety, and among the rest Colley, of course, was working at full pressure. His letters are numerous; he is busy on all sides at once. It is not only in the composition of long and comprehensive papers, such as that upon 'Russian Action in Afghanistan,' or his 'Note on the Kabul Mission, and our Future Policy in Central Asia'—documents covering many closely printed pages—that he is engaged; a whole host of public telegrams and official, semi-official, and private letters are also his work. Among his papers are many interesting letters from persons representing various shades of Indian opinion—from Sir Alfred Lyall (then Foreign Secretary in India), whose wide and sympathetic knowledge of Asiatic thought and life made so valuable any expression of opinion; from Colonel Roberts, whose natural talent for war Colley was quick to recognise; and from the Deputy Commissioner at Peshawur, Major Cavagnari, already mentioned in these pages, and now, during the last year of his life, destined to be always in prominent action.

It is impossible to even summarise the rapid interchange of ideas between the man at the look-out on the frontier and the private secretary at Simla. Colley and Cavagnari seem to have held many opinions in common, especially with regard to the security of our Indian Empire. One who knew them both at this time has noticed in this correspondence 'the interaction of Cavagnari's frontier experience and practical conversance with the border races, and of George Colley's more varied life and keen sense of administrative exigencies and restrictions. The

patriotism, too, which in him had all the force of a religion, is expressed in these letters with less than his usual reserve.'[1]

From the first rumour of a Russian envoy coming to Kabul, Colley recognised the gravity of the news and its bearing upon the whole Central Asian question:

It will be a bad day for the Amir when a Russian officer openly enters Kabul. Russia at present cannot give him any real assistance, while it will place him hopelessly in the wrong as regards us.

The home telegram of yesterday regarding the discussions in the German Parliament is to me most interesting. What with Russia exhausted and threatened with internal struggles, Austria timid, France determinedly quiescent, and Germany suddenly convulsed by dread of socialism, it really seems as if England were going to take her (to my mind) proper place as the most powerful, the richest, safest, and most united nation—notwithstanding Parliamentary claptrap—and that Beaconsfield will quietly supplant Bismarck as the arbiter of Europe. What a wonderful position he will close his career with, if he carries this conference successfully to an issue![2]

After news of the doings at the Berlin Congress, the acquisition of Cyprus, and the quasi-protectorate of Asia Minor, he writes again:

The cession to Russia of Batum, for which I think she would have fought, and our occupation of Cyprus have, I think, settled the Eastern question for the present. . . . Crete has long been a hobby with many people, as covering the Suez Canal better than any other station can do; but it is open to the serious objection that it contains a particularly troublesome, discontented population, with strong Greek instincts. In Crete we should immediately have had to face

[1] Biographical Notes, E. P. C.
[2] June 10, 1878, to Major Cavagnari.

a strong agitation for annexation to Greece; and if we resisted this, as we should have been bound to do, we might have found ourselves in the same unsatisfactory position as the Turks, continually putting down insurrections and hanging our own subjects. Moreover, it commands no part of the coasts of the Mediterranean, though it is a good naval station. Cyprus, on the other hand, though a little off the direct line, possesses many advantages—a quiet peaceable population with no strong national proclivities, being made up almost equally of Christians and Mahomedans, and having generally, like Malta, been an appanage of some distant Christian country, at one time owned by Venice, at another by the Knights of Malta; while its position, without so directly covering Suez, much more directly protects the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

. . . But, after all, the Afghan question is the really interesting one for us out here.

. . . It seems to me very desirable that we should try and have some policy of our own, shadowed out at least, against the event of a disruption of Afghanistan, whether by the Amir's death, or by internal revolution, or external invasion. I don't see at present that we have ever considered seriously what we should do if we heard to-morrow that the Amir was dead, and Yakub, Abdulla Jan, and Abdul Rahman all contesting the vacant throne. I don't suppose one can lay down a definite policy beforehand. But I think we should collect and put together all possible information.[3]

Another of these letters to Cavagnari comments on the diplomatic arrangements just then telegraphed from Europe:

The most important point of all in the new treaty seems to me to be the substitution of an individual guarantee for European guarantees. As I understand it, Austria, which was the country most directly interested in the European provinces of Turkey, personally guarantees those provinces; and England, whose interests lie entirely in the Asiatic

[3] July 8, 1878, to Major Cavagnari.

provinces, guarantees those. Any further advance of Russia must be a direct slap in the face to one of these two countries, and there is a vast difference between ignoring Europe generally and slapping a particular country. Lord Lytton had a good story recently about poor Lord Leitrim, who, shortly before his murder, talking with a countryman about some cases of landlord shooting, asked, 'Why don't the rascals shoot me?' 'Ah! thin, yer honner,' said the man, 'it's just this—what's everybody's business is nobody's business!' and I think this applies peculiarly to a European guarantee.[4]

The report of the presence at Kabul of a mission headed by Russian officers of rank was confirmed early in August. Although the mission was the openly avowed reply of the Russian Government to the move of Indian troops into the Mediterranean, it was nevertheless a breach of the existing arrangement which precluded Russian interference in Afghanistan, and it was therefore deemed imperative to despatch a counter embassy from India after notice had been given to the Amir. That mission, perhaps the most important ever sent from India, had as its chief one of the most distinguished officers of his time. Thirty-eight years earlier, Sir Neville Chamberlain had marched from Kandahar to Kabul in the army of General Nott; he had served under Napier in Sindh, had fought at the Sutlej and in the Mutiny, and was, at the moment of which we write, Commander-in-Chief in Madras. In the memoirs of the great Napier his name can still be read, marked early for fame as one of the finest swordsmen and most brilliant soldiers of that now distant day.

[4] July 19, 1878.

Cavagnari, Bellew, St. John, all well-known frontier names, were attached to the mission, and two Indian nobles—one of the old order, Pertab Singh, a Rajpoot prince of a thousand years of pedigree, the other a Mahomedan of less ancient blood. Two hundred of the Guides formed the escort. The Amir's Warden of the Pass, Faiz Mahomed Khan, acting in the name of the Amir, refused the passage through the Khyber. Cavagnari withdrew to Jamrud, and the next day Sir Neville Chamberlain dissolved the mission. The turning back of the embassy was regarded by the Home and Indian Governments as an open affront, rendering war practically inevitable. Indeed, for some months the course of events had been trending in that direction. As early as August 5, Colley had written: 'The Russians have sent a mission to Kabul headed by General Abramoff,[5] the Governor of Samarkand, and the Amir has received them with honour. This seems to me a fatal mistake, both on the part of Russia and of the Amir.' Two days before the turning back of the English embassy from the Khyber he said: 'When I first heard of the reception of a Russian mission at Kabul, my exclamation was, "The Lord hath delivered him into our hands," and every day has confirmed me in this impression.'

But hostilities were not to begin just yet. Many things had to be thought of before the campaign could be undertaken. Three columns of invasion were to be prepared; enormous transport trains organised; supplies collected from all parts. 'The last Afghan war began,' writes Colley, 'by the Com-

[5] It turned out afterwards that General Stolietoff, not Abramoff, was the Russian envoy—a soldier of marked individuality and distinguished bravery.

mander-in-Chief resigning, because he considered the Government did not sufficiently comply with his demands, and afterwards nearly came to disaster because the forces sent were much larger than the country could feed. I hope we are not going to repeat the same programme.'[6]

We take from the mass of papers dealing with this time of preparation for the advance into Afghanistan one letter written by Colley to Sir Garnet Wolseley in November 1878, which summarises the military and political objects of the moment:

I am indeed sorry, both for your sake and ours, that you should be at Cyprus at a time when we have such interesting work in India; and it does seem a cruel bit of bad luck that you should have gone there instead of taking the Bombay command, which latter would probably have resulted in your commanding the southern line of advance into Afghanistan. Had you been at Bombay I am very certain that the Viceroy would have insisted on your appointment. . . .

Our great anxiety all through has been to avoid if possible a military occupation of Afghanistan, a measure from which it would be very difficult to withdraw, and which would land us in heavy political and financial embarrassments. It was stated some time ago that had we not been driven out of Kabul in 1841 we should in any case have had to evacuate it very shortly, or India would have been bankrupt. This may be an exaggeration, but considering the financial difficulties India is already suffering from, owing to the fall in the value of silver, the recent famines, and other causes, I seriously believe that the cost of an armed occupation of Afghanistan is more than we could bear. Our aim, therefore, was in the first place to try and come to an amicable arrangement with the Amir; failing this, to bring such military pressure to bear as would either bring him to his senses, or upset him and cause him to be replaced by a ruler more friendly to

[6] October 28, 1878, to Colonel Villiers.

ourselves, without at the same time involving us in any grave responsibility. . . .

Our original operations were therefore designed to apply the greatest amount of pressure with the least risk of responsibility regarding permanent occupation of country, or of involving ourselves in a national war with the people; and we have every reason to believe that we can advance both up the Kuram Valley and to Kandahar with the good will of the inhabitants, and with no opposition except such as we shall meet from the Amir's regular army. . . .

We have secured the co-operation of the great bulk of the Khyber and Mohmund tribes, and it will be an easy task to expel the Amir's garrisons, and then in concert with the Khyber tribes keep the pass open. For this purpose we propose to advance as far as Dakha, but not beyond. We cannot in any case reach Kabul this winter, nor do we wish to, for our earnest desire is to avoid an occupation of Kabul. We could go to Jellalabad and winter there, but to do so would entail feeding a large force, in a barren country, at some distance from its base, during the winter months. It would put us to very heavy expense, might involve us in inconvenient friction with the surrounding Afghan tribes, and would in no way really improve our position; and this idea has accordingly been abandoned. Our winter operations, therefore, are limited to the occupation of the Khyber and Dakha on that line; the expulsion of the Amir's troops from the Kuram and the occupation of that valley by Roberts's force; and an advance as far as Kandahar. During the winter we shall lay in large supplies at Quetta and Kandahar, in the upper Kuram Valley, and at Peshawur; and if operations have to be continued in the spring we shall be able to push forward rapidly from all points. It is very difficult to judge as yet what will happen next spring—whether the Amir will be dethroned by his own people before that time, as many hope; whether he will still hold on at Kabul while Kandahar and Western Afghanistan pass under our protection; or whether we shall be in for a great war with Russia.

Meantime an ultimatum was sent to Sher Ali, and,

by the direction of the Home Government, he was informed that, unless a satisfactory reply was received by November 20, he would be treated as a declared enemy. No reply having been received by November 20, orders for the advance were issued that night, and on November 21 the Khyber, the Kuram, and the Quetta columns crossed the frontier at their several points. Except at the fort of Ali Musjid, which was quickly captured, the Khyber column met with no opposition, and a few weeks later Jellalabad was entered without resistance.

Advancing up the Kuram Valley, the column under General Roberts reached the foot of the Peiwar Kotal on the evening of December 1. Next day the Afghan position was carried after arduous operations extending over eight hours. All the enemy's artillery and stores fell into our hands. This victory was decisive so far as the fortunes of Sher Ali were concerned. Four days later General Roberts telegraphed to the Viceroy that the Amir had fled from Kabul towards the Oxus.

The column under General Donald Stewart operating against Kandahar had met with no opposition and entered that city early in January 1879.

CHAPTER XII

INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

Treaty of Gandamak—Inspecting the passes—With Sir Garnet Wolseley in Zululand—Cetewayo—Transvaal affairs—Recalled to India.

SHER ALI died in February at Mazar Sherif, one march from the Oxus River. For more than a month preceding that date various rumours of his death had prevailed. Before his departure he had nominated his son Yakub Khan to the succession, and left him in authority at Kabul. But rival claimants were appearing in different places, and disturbance was spreading throughout the country. Holding the three great passes leading from India to Afghanistan, we were in a position to rest upon our successes and treat—but with whom, that was the difficulty. Ultimately negotiations were opened with Yakub Khan, and conducted by Cavagnari with dexterous diplomacy and untiring energy. In order to hasten the progress of these overtures for peace proposals, preparations were made to push forward, from Jellalabad to the Kuram Valley, two columns threatening Kabul. But after some correspondence Yakub, on April 17, proposed to visit in person the representative of the British Government.

Our camp now stood near Gandamak, on the road between the Khyber Pass and Kabul. Here, on May 8, Yakub, with his retinue of notables and

about 400 followers and escort, was greeted with a royal salute and received in great state by Cavagnari on behalf of the British Government as the recognised Amir of Kabul. 'It must have been a gratifying moment to you,' wrote Colley to Cavagnari, 'when you received Yakub on his arrival in the camp. I can imagine nothing that will help the Government more in its present difficulties.' The news was in fact especially welcome at home, arriving, as it chanced, amid preparations to avenge the disaster of Isandula, which had marked the opening of the Zulu War.

Yakub, while objecting to proposals for cession of territory, was willing to accept conditions as to European agents and foreign relations, subject to the stipulation that the European officers should reside only in Kabul, and should abstain from interfering in the affairs of Afghanistan. After some negotiation the Treaty of Gandamak was signed on May 26. This document gave us control of the Amir's foreign relations; the residence at Kabul of a British representative, and the right to send British agents on occasion to the Afghan frontiers; the control of the Khyber and Michni passes, and the assignment of the Kuram, Pishin, and Sibi valleys.

The article stipulating for the control of the northern passes was so framed as to secure us the command of the three great roads leading out of India into Afghanistan. But as the adjacent territories were to be treated as assigned districts there was no cession of the territory, which was only placed by the treaty under British protectorate.

At the foot of the document Cavagnari wrote his name, little imagining that it was his own death-

warrant he was signing. 'It will be beneficial to our future dealings with Yakub Khan,' he had written a few days earlier, 'to let him thoroughly recognise his present weakness, so that hereafter he may not be able to talk so much about his "God-granted kingdom," without realising that "man" has had something to do with his position as Amir, and that this man is the British Government.'

The news of the Treaty of Gandamak was received with immense enthusiasm.

Colley's views on the military principles which should determine our frontier line are still of interest. The following extract from a letter written shortly before peace was concluded expresses them:

> The great point under discussion now is, what territory we should permanently hold. Probably you will have read Hamley's lecture and the many other opinions that have been expressed by writers at home. There is a large party, among whom I see is now included Lord Napier of Magdala, who strongly advocate the retention of Kandahar; but I am dead against this. My theory is that in a country like this, where our action must necessarily always be offensive not defensive, when we do fight we should always have difficulties behind us and open ground in front. I have a strong objection to being in the position of a dog who is at the end of his chain, and consequently can be chaffed by small boys without possibility of retaliation. I like to have the full length of a good long chain to charge if necessary. For this reason, the principle which I have persistently advocated throughout is that we should just hold the passes and no more, giving ourselves the greatest possible extent of easy country in our front. If we occupy Kandahar we must necessarily protect the district of which it is the capital also; otherwise we shall be starved out of it. To do this we must push as far as Ghirishk on the one hand, and Khelat-i-Ghilzai on the other, and take up a new line of frontier posi-

tions nearly 200 miles in extent and mostly abutting on a very difficult country. We should then find ourselves with precisely the same class of frontier that we are now anxious to abolish—namely, one in which our posts would be at the foot of wild mountains, subject to constant insult, without much power of punishment; and we should probably involve ourselves with some of the most powerful and warlike of the Afghan tribes, with whom so far we have been able to keep on very good terms. On the other hand, if we confine our occupation to Pishin and the Kojak Pass, we have an excellent natural boundary in a broad tract of desert land which extends from the Amram Mountains to near Kandahar. It would be extremely difficult to plunder or harry us there, for our cavalry from an advanced post at Chaman could ride sixty miles in almost any direction in pursuit, and we have Kandahar at our feet, absolutely at our mercy, as a pledge for the good behaviour of Southern Afghanistan.

About the Kuram there is little difference of opinion. Everybody admits the value of this road and the suitability of the Peiwar for a military cantonment. There is wood, water, an excellent plateau, and the climate not very different from that of England, never very hot and covered with snow for a month or two in the year. Here British troops would thrive, just as much as they now deteriorate at Peshawur and our present pestilential frontier station.

The Khyber line, however, offers exactly the same points of dispute as Kandahar does. Hamley and a very small following propose to abandon it altogether, and remain in a defensive position at the eastern extremity. This, however, shows utter ignorance of the character of the hill tribes, and the way in which they are controlled, for so long as we do this we can gain no influence whatever over the tribes in the pass, and if ever an adversary came against us by this road our position opposite the mouth would soon be untenable, the country all round being harried by the mountaineers. The only way of getting control over these tribes is to occupy the two debouches of their country and so command their trade; for they cannot live entirely in their hills, which do not produce all the necessaries of life, and the way to keep

them in order is simply to blockade them and cut them off from salt and other things which they have to purchase in the plains, until they behave well again. . . .

The discussion *here* is whether we should hold Jellalabad or even go on to Gandamak. I have not yet visited the ground personally, though I hope to do so in a few days, but from all I can learn I am most distinctly in favour of falling back from Jellalabad and occupying Lundi Kotal, which is a small plateau about ten miles from the western end of the pass, and would practically give the command of that debouch, as from this point the pass falls and widens until it opens into a great plain which leads with little interruption to Gandamak. This point, being only thirty miles from Peshawur, would add little to our communications, but it would give us effective control of the pass, and at the same time a fairly rich province, a considerable town, and a sweep of about seventy miles of open country in our immediate front.

The home Intelligence Department are more ambitious than we are out here, and wish us to occupy Kushi also. Theoretically speaking, this undoubtedly would complete the system of holding the western debouches of the passes, but from all that I can learn we practically command the Shutargardan without going so far, and to occupy Kushi would practically be to occupy Kabul itself. It would entail almost as heavy responsibility upon us, for it is only forty miles distant from that capital, while it would be separated by 150 miles of country, some of it extremely difficult, from our present border; and we should have to keep a proportionately large force at Kushi itself, entailing a considerable struggle in the maintenance of communications.[1]

Notwithstanding certain acknowledged advantages belonging to the Kuram Valley, a question had arisen as to the retention by us of the Khyber instead. Cavagnari was in favour of our keeping possession of the Khyber Valley as far as Ganda-

[1] April 5, 1879, to Colonel Macgregor.

mak, and giving up the Kuram to Yakub Khan. Towards the end of April Colley had been sent to inspect both routes and report on their respective merits. The Viceroy was then at Lahore, a convenient situation for conference with the Punjab Government and army headquarters. Starting thence and riding rapidly through the Khyber, Colley reached Gandamak in three days from Peshawur, had interviews with Cavagnari, Sir Samuel Browne, and others, and started back the same day for Peshawur. Thence he turned for the Kuram Valley, and, riding hard, reached Ali Khel and the Shutargardan Pass again in three days—an expedition which he thus describes to his sister:

I started from Peshawur with a very light kit indeed—only a pair of wallets and a few things wrapped up in a waterproof which my orderly carried on his saddle. . . .

At Jamrud I was given a small escort, as there were rumours of some men of the Zakha Khel tribe being about and up to mischief. . . .

I reached Ali Musjid about ten, having had a good look on my way at the position from which the artillery first opened fire on the fort, and from which Sir Sam. Browne directed the attack. I afterwards walked over the whole extent of the position held by the Afghans. . . .

At Barrikhal, as I entered the gate, an English sergeant said to me: 'It is well you are here in time, sir; a few minutes more, and it might have gone hard with you.' He pointed to something on the hill, and said that the tribes were coming down in large numbers to attack the post. There was a great deal of mirage at the time on the stony waste, and it was very difficult to make out objects at a distance. There certainly were a number of objects moving about, whether sheep or camels or men it was almost impossible to judge, though I declared very positively for either sheep or camels. I believe the commanding officer

still imagines they were men, but I am perfectly certain that they were sheep, for I afterwards saw a flock of sheep not very far from the post, and when I got some distance away from them they became elongated by the mirage and presented exactly the same appearance.[2]

On the return journey down the valley, he visited the ford where the 10th Hussars had been swept away.

It was not easy to make out much from the ford itself as to the cause of the accident, but I met at dinner in the evening Captain Spottiswoode of the regiment, who had actually led the squadron across the ford, and was one of those swept down but saved. Even his account, however, failed to make it clear to me how so large a number could almost simultaneously be swept off and drowned. He said that the tail of the squadron in front of them had partly got off the track, and that some mules that were following were swept away altogether, and he, not noticing that they were off their legs, followed them into deep water, when he suddenly found that his horse was being carried down, but being a powerful spirited English horse he was able to turn it up the river, and make it swim against the stream. As he did so, he found the men, who had rather crowded on him, all being swept down past him into the rapids.[3]

The same letter contains an account of his ride to the summit of the Shutargardan Pass in company with General Roberts, and gives a picture of life and scenery in those Afghan-Alpine regions. He rode through the Kohat Pass to Thul:

Next morning I started for Kuram, riding up the new road which Roberts has made through the valley—an excellent road in most places. . . .

Roberts's camp was full of old friends, and I had a very pleasant time there, as you may suppose; but I had no time

[2] Simla, May 7, 1879.

[3] May 7, 1879, to his sister.

to lose, and the next morning before daylight I started for a long ride up to the front, to see what was being done towards the Shutargardan. From Hubid Killa, the old Afghan cantonment, we rode to the top of the Peiwar, and on the road passed one of the most interesting sights I have ever seen—a large nomad tribe of Ghilzais on the move. It brought to my mind, more vividly than anything else could have done, what might have been the appearance of the children of Israel on their march. I think we passed quite six miles of sheep, goats, camels, cattle, mules, and people. The men were distributed at intervals along the line as escort with their arms. The women were some walking, some on camels. The camels carried the tents, made of that peculiar camel-hair cloth, and great bags, often of very rich barbaric colour, and on the top of the camels were strapped hundreds of children and kids promiscuously, rivalling one another in their cries.

These people were both surprised and grateful for the treatment they received in our country. At first they thought they would not be allowed to pass through our posts, and intended regaining their summer headquarters by some very difficult and circuitous mountain paths. General Roberts, however, had notice sent to them all that they might pass through our lines and would be left unmolested, and as we rode by, many of them came up to thank him for the good treatment they had received. They also were much pleased with the new roads, over which they declared 'even their lame sheep could walk.' Since then he has received several letters from the chiefs of these tribes, expressing their gratitude for our treatment of them, and saying that so long as they were within our posts they lost nothing, but as soon as they got among their own people they were heavily plundered.

Roberts was very anxious that I should see the entrance of the great Hazardarkt defile, the worst part of the Shutargardan Pass. We got fresh horses, and started up the bed of the river. The road is still all loose shingle, and crosses the mountain stream about twenty times in its course. Finding time was short, Roberts led up at a hand

gallop. I think we must have looked the wildest party conceivable as we tore up this road, scattering the stones in every direction. To add to our haste, a heavy hail storm and then a thunder-storm, with rain, hail, and sleet combined, broke on us, and as the mountain torrent soon began to rise, we had to run a race with it, or it would have been impassable.

However, we managed to reach the point at which the defile begins, and rode a little distance up it to the west point, from which we could judge very well of the general character of the road. This road is being made under curious conditions. The hill tribes reserve to themselves full right to fight us or not as they may feel inclined, but they have no objection to taking our money for making the road and have contracted to do so. The story goes that for every mile of road they make they throw up a certain number of breastworks from which they will be able to shoot down on whoever may attempt to use the road. However, it is a great advantage getting the road made by native labour, without any protection or any supervision beyond that of an officer now and then riding up with a small escort.

From this we galloped back to Ali Khel even more wildly than we went up, perfectly benumbed with the hail and sleet.[4]

Next day a visit was made to the scene of the fight on the Peiwar of the previous December:

We followed the exact route taken by the turning column, which started at 9 o'clock at night, and marched for six hours up the stony bed of a dry torrent; then turned up the steep, almost precipitous spur on which the Afghans had built their barricades, and followed step by step the movements of the column. I dare say you have heard how, as they were advancing up the ravine, and just as they approached the barricade, two shots were fired in the middle of the column. You may imagine it was an anxious moment

[4] May 7, 1879, to his sister.

for General Roberts. He had observed that the 29th Native Regiment (which consisted mostly of Afridis and Pathans), and which originally was to have led the attack, straggled and delayed very much. He had just halted the regiment and was talking to the colonel when he heard the two shots. Almost everything, of course, depended on a surprise. Then a native officer whispered to the colonel, 'Treachery.' There was not much time, however, to think, so he (Roberts) immediately ordered up the next regiment, which happened to be the Gurkhas, an admirable fighting corps; put two companies of the 72nd in support of the Gurkhas, and in advance of the 29th, and two more companies behind, so as practically to enclose them, and then pushed on as rapidly as he could.

Fortunately, everybody in the enemy's position seems to have been asleep, for the shots were unnoticed, and they got to within 100 yards of the first barricade before they were discovered. Then a sentry, standing behind a big tree which still remains there, fired off his gun into the advanced party and gave the alarm. The little Gurkhas, however, rushed the place almost before another shot could be fired. The Afridis then retreated to another barricade about 300 yards further up the hill, closely followed by the Gurkhas and 72nd. Here there was a sharper fight, the Gurkhas losing several men but ultimately carrying the position at the point of the bayonet and killing most of the defenders.[5]

The last scene on this ridge is thus described:

Roberts halted for a time on a little plateau which opened out near the point, and then, wishing to give the 29th another chance, led the attack again with them. This seems to me to have been rather a mistake on his part, due probably to his own plucky and over-chivalrous disposition. He led the attack in person, and the 29th followed him well enough so long as there was no serious opposition, but as soon as the Afridis showed again in force they fell back. He immediately sent his staff-officers and others about him

[5] May 7, 1879, to his sister.

to bring up reinforcements, and for some time was actually the only European officer in front, getting together little groups of men, and trying to show fight with them until the others came up.

You may imagine how interesting it was, going over the ground and discussing every point—what he did do, what his objects were, what he might have done—with Roberts in person.[6]

Colley rejoined the Viceroy at Simla, about the 1st of May. The letter describing his ride through the passes had been written chiefly for his father's benefit, but this last message from the son he was so proud of never reached the old man's ears. 'One day,' writes Lady Colley, 'we had been dining at Government House. It had been an especially pleasant evening. Affairs were well on the road to peace. Coming home to our own bungalow we were in great spirits. There was a delightful sense that the strain of the last twelve months was over. Presently he turned to the usual pile of telegrams upon his table. Amongst them was the announcement of his father's death.'[6]

The Viceroy at Government House seems to have heard some rumour of his friend's bereavement, and, late though it was, he would not wait to give his sympathy till the morning's work should bring them together. He wrote at once:

DEAR FRIEND,—I learn to-night that you have received sad news from England.

I ask not what it is, for how few of the troubles that touch our affections can ever be explained even to those who are nearest to our inner life!

But with your place in my heart widened and deepened by the knowledge that there is trouble in yours, I cannot let

[6] Biographical Notes.

the day close without assuring you of my tenderest and most loving sympathy now and always, dear Colley.

Take this line as a silent pressure of the hand of one to whom nothing that affects your life, for joy or sorrow, can ever now be indifferent, and believe me

Your affectionate

LYTTON.

On May 22, a letter congratulating Cavagnari on his conduct of the negotiations has this concluding paragraph:

I am sure you will be sorry to learn that a telegram a few days ago brought me the news of the unexpected death of my father. Though over eighty he was as keen and his intellect as clear as with most men of fifty, and I know no mind to which I would so gladly refer any difficult political or other practical questions. When I saw him last in England, he was so well that I had every reason to expect that I should see him again on my return; and though I have now made a home of my own, I still feel very keenly the loss of the home to which during many years of a tolerably rough and very wandering life I had always returned.

He took the keenest interest in you and your doings, and I know no one to whom the news of the successful termination of the negotiations brought about by you would have given more real pleasure.

The telegram announcing the signature of the Treaty of Gandamak reached Colley on May 26. Closing the campaign of 1878 and his work in relation to it, it set him free to act upon another telegram which was put into his hands only twenty minutes later—a request from Sir Garnet Wolseley, then about to proceed to Natal, that Colley would join him there at once as chief of the staff. 'Accept gratefully,' he replied; 'leave here in three days.' On the same day,

May 27, the Viceroy despatched the following message to the Secretary of State for India:

My private secretary, Colonel Colley, has accepted appointment as chief of Sir Garnet Wolseley's staff, and will leave for Natal immediately. For successful conduct of Kabul War, and satisfactory conclusion of peace, I am more indebted to his assistance than even to that of Cavagnari or any one else, and his name would have been first on my list of recommendations for K.C.S.I. in War Gazette.' I earnestly solicit this reward of his important services in India as a personal favour to myself, and shall be most grateful if you will authorise me to assure him before he leaves me that it will be granted. He already has C.B. and C.M.G. I telegraph this without his knowledge.

A few days later Colley started for South Africa. Congratulations and farewell good wishes flowed in upon him from many directions. The rapid transfer from one scene of trouble to another of a man whose name was already identified with so much that had been successful impressed the public mind. The value of the services which the Viceroy had so generously acknowledged was widely recognised. The idea of Fortune—that most potent factor in success—had also begun to attach itself to Colley's name and personality. Men spoke of how the scene had changed in Ashanti when he took in hand the broken and disorganised business of the transport and supply. And now this sudden call to a distant portion of the Empire in which the fortune of war had so far been unfavourable, seemed to emphasise the fact that among the military servants of the Crown few abler brains or steadier hands for dangerous work could be found. But that which is even of more importance to a man's career than outside opinion—namely, some

inward sense of his own fortune—had now come to Colley. In a pencilled note which he wrote his wife the day following his departure from Simla, while the train was carrying him towards Kurachi, he says, referring to the heat, then at its worst in the plains: 'With that extraordinary run of luck which seems to accompany me in everything—from getting my little wife downwards—*and at times almost frightens me*, we ran into a heavy fall of rain at Amritsur which has accompanied us so far and made everything cool and delightful.'

The allusion which I have marked by italics comes only in parenthesis to a trifling matter, but it shows the drift of thought in a mind that was always thinking.

Up in the Afghan Hills Cavagnari telegraphed from camp Safed Sang: 'Hearty congratulations on your appointment. May your new work be as successful as your former service at the Cape was.' He too with the laurels thick upon him, yet with doubt as to it all peeping out through the leaves. For he writes two days after the treaty had been signed:

> I am very sorry (selfishly speaking) that you are going away, though of course I am glad you have got such a good appointment and have the chance of earning fresh laurels, a chance you are sure to make the best use of. Sometimes I feel rather low about Yakub Khan, and doubt whether he will turn out well, but generally my sanguine feelings get uppermost.[7]

On June 5, Colley sailed from Kurachi for Aden, Zanzibar, and Natal, a long monotonous voyage in the teeth of the monsoon, and against the strong current which runs from Mozambique along the

[7] May 28, 1879.

eastern coast of Africa. While the voyage was still in progress, Lord Lytton writes to tell him how much he is missed in India:

I begin a letter to you under a sad sense of discouragement, caused by the knowledge of the length of time which must elapse before it reaches you, and the uncertainty as to where, when, and how it may find you. For much of what occupies my thoughts, as I write, no room will be left in yours by the important and anxious work now claiming your attention, and all the news I can send you about public affairs, or official matters in India, will be stale news before it reaches you. Nor can I hope for many a long month to receive from you that apt and ready response never before withheld to the thousand questions I daily wish to ask you —with what is now a daily sigh. However, *Patientia est portus miserorum.* So now to my chronicle. Your poor little wife looks so sad and forlorn, with her wistful eyes and eager face, that my heart aches to the core when I see her. Never since the days of the Odyssey was absent hero more missed and mourned and longed for by his faithful spouse and forsaken friends.

Cavagnari is now at Simla. All I have yet heard from him about Yakub, &c., is quite satisfactory.[8]

At Zanzibar the news of the fresh tragedy in Zululand, the death of the Prince Imperial, reached him. He was deeply affected by it. 'To me,' he writes, 'it seems the most painful and unfortunate thing that has happened for England for many years past. At Isandula at least our men died like Englishmen; but here!'[9] Four days later, writing from Mozambique, his mind is still running on this catastrophe:

I cannot get that poor Prince's death out of my head; it seems a sort of national disgrace that we can never throw

[8] June 22, 1879. [9] June 28, 1879, to his wife.

off. I had rather we had lost another fight like Isandula, for that at least can always be wiped out, and is not disgraceful.[1]

A later letter describes the first reception of the news:

I am afraid the more one hears of the circumstances of the Prince Imperial's death, the more sad and discreditable to our name it appears.

I had a graphic account of the meeting between an officer who was with him and Buller, from a man who was present. Evelyn Wood ('Sir Evelyn' he is now, I see, and right well he has earned it) and Buller were riding ahead of their column as usual to look out for good camping ground, when suddenly they saw an officer riding furiously towards them —so furiously that Buller observed, 'Why, the man rides as if he thought the Kaffirs were after him.' As he came nearer he gesticulated wildly and beckoned to them to go back, but they rode on till they met him. 'What the devil is the matter with you?' said Buller. 'The Prince, the Prince Imperial is killed,' was all the man could gasp out, breathless and wild. 'Where?—where is his body?' asked Buller sharply. The man could only gasp and point to a hill about three miles off, from which they could now see some twenty Kaffirs going away in the opposite direction with three led horses. 'Where are your men, sir? How many did you lose?' said Buller sharply and sternly, now thoroughly roused. 'They are behind me—I don't know,' stammered the unfortunate man. 'By God, sir,' said Buller, turning on him savagely, 'you deserve to be shot, and I hope will be—I could shoot you myself,' and turned his back on him.

Had it been either Wood or Buller, they would have turned had there been a thousand Kaffirs, and probably would have brought him away; but this wretched officer seems to have raced with his men who should get away first, and was actually leading his men in their flight, and still

[1] July 2, 1879, to his wife.

galloping wildly though three miles away from the scene of action.[2]

On July 7 they are at Delagoa Bay. 'Once more on old familiar ground,' he wrote. It is South Africa again—that land to him so full of memories—the nursery ground of his ambitions, the scene of his early labours, the country of his first hopes. He writes to his wife:

At sea. 9 P.M. A wild wet stormy night, the wind howling as I have seldom heard it howl, the sky black as ink, the sea white and gleaming with foam and phosphorescence. The sea is unnaturally calm, as if surprised and overmastered by the fury of the wind; and the ship, almost as steady as if in harbour, only gives a little uneasy shiver every now and then, as if it thought there was something uncanny in the extraordinary absence of waves. I have been walking the deck as long as it was possible to do so for wind and rain, and am now driven for shelter to the unpleasant atmosphere of the saloon.

Do you know what I often think of, dear, as I walk up and down at night? . . . I cannot help feeling that a long course of dry hard practical work and thought has prevented my responding to the more intellectual, inquiring, and imaginative part of your mind as fully as I should have done had we been married some years ago when we were at Aldershot together. And I wonder whether the change is permanent or temporary only. . . . It seems to me that part of it is permanent and the necessary consequence of increased years and experience—of the partial satisfying of that curiosity which Froude considered was the great stimulus of thought and spring of pleasure in early manhood, getting to know how much is known by man and where the limit is reached. But I do think and hope that much of it is temporary only, for I find myself now (when not too much put out by the perpetual pitching!) thinking and speculating almost as I used to in old days—and all my thoughts at once stirred by

[2] Port Durnford, July 21, 1879, to his wife.

any book or anything at all out of the common. However, my thoughts soon come back to the one subject—what you are doing and how you are.

It would seem as though the leisure of the voyage, and the first sight after eventful years of South African mountains, had released his mind from the dry reality of affairs and stirred his imagination to the weirdness of the welcome given by the winds and waves upon his return to the scenes of early soldier life. Next day he landed at Durban, and began again a life of busy action in Natal.

The three and a half years that had elapsed since Colley left these shores had been eventful in the history of South Africa. The annexation of the Transvaal was followed by events which culminated in our invasion of Zululand. Of the three invading columns, the principal one had been partly destroyed at Isandula. Reinforcements had been despatched from England. Four months later Sir Garnet Wolseley was sent out to assume chief command, and, as we have seen, Colley had accepted the post of chief of the staff. The new commander reached Natal on June 28. He intended to push on with the coast column towards Ulundi and join the main force halted near that place. But the violence of the surf made it impossible to land at Port Durnford, and he had to return to Durban and thence make the journey by land. These movements lost six days. Meantime, on July 4, the decisive action was fought by Lord Chelmsford at Ulundi.

Thus, when Colley reached Natal four days subsequent to the battle of Ulundi, he found the war practically over. Much still remained to be done, for Cetewayo had not surrendered and the greater por-

tion of his soldiers were still in the field, but resistance on any large scale was at an end. Much as he regretted 'the cruel disappointment' of this news, he rejoiced in Lord Chelmsford's victory. He writes to Sir Evelyn Wood on July 10:

A line to congratulate you on your last great success, and on your grand services and successes all through the campaign. It was a pleasure and a pride to me in India, as your name kept appearing, to claim you as an old friend and 'Ashanti man.' Of course for my own sake I am sorry to have arrived too late for the fun, but I am real glad that Lord Chelmsford should have had the chance of crying quits with the Zulus, and, as I suppose, practically finishing the war.

And to his wife he wrote:

I am glad that Lord Chelmsford has had this brilliant success. Many things in connection with it have also given me pleasure—first and foremost that Bill Beresford distinguished himself, and has been, I believe, recommended for the Victoria Cross. . . .

Every one is loud in Colonel Buller's praises, and speaks of him as having made his name in this war, and impressed men with his talent for war, and especially as a leader of irregular horse. Although stern enough in maintaining discipline, his men worship him. He has on several occasions brought men out under fire, and saved lives; he is everywhere himself, leader in every charge, rear-guard in every retreat, and seems to combine an admirable military eye and very cool judgment with wonderful courage and dash. He is an old friend of mine, originally a Staff College pupil, and one of whom I always formed a very high opinion; and I am pleased to think that I had something to say to bringing him out here, as he had considerable doubts, and came to consult me when I was in England last. I have fallen among a perfect troop of friends here, and am tumbling into somebody's arms every five minutes.[3]

[3] Durban, July 9, 1879, to his wife.

This and other letters written soon after landing tell some of the more ludicrous incidents of the campaign:

This place, Durban, is full of absurd stories about X. At a time when transport is above all things precious, he has had a waggon fitted as a movable hen-house, with coops and places for the hens to lay, so that he may always be sure of his fresh eggs for breakfast. He dresses, or did dress (I fancy Sir Garnet has altered matters), in the most absurd costume, with a sombrero hat and a long peacock's feather, and an imitation of a puggaree tied in what he considers a picturesque and artistic carelessness on one side.

He telegraphed to Major B. for six milch cows among other supplies, but Major B., while meeting all his other demands, telegraphed back, 'Must draw the line at milch cows.'

The streets are full of all sorts of military and naval types. The wonderful number of straps and dodges that some of them have about them is a sight, and every one seems to try how many odds and ends he can possibly carry about him. Y. is said to beat every one, and a man describing him to me said 'he only wanted a few candles stuck about him to make a Christmas-tree.'[4]

Colley joined Sir Garnet Wolseley at Port Durnford (having suffered the usual couple of days' delay on account of the surf), and took up his duties as chief of the staff. The whole party then pushed inland to St. Paul's, where the flying column under Sir Evelyn Wood and Lord Chelmsford's headquarters were established. The object was to stop the downward march of some portion of the troops from Ulundi. Returning to Natal from Zululand with Sir Garnet Wolseley, Colley set to work at Maritzburg to disentangle from the two columns which had been engaged

[4] Off Port Durnford, July 11, 1879, to his wife.

in the Zulu War, two small fighting forces with which to penetrate the Zulu country in various directions, capture the king, and subdue the outlying Zulu clans. The great bulk of the army was ordered to move to the coast and embark for England. The generals and their staffs were also sent home, and by the end of July Sir Garnet Wolseley was on his road to Ulundi, there to meet the Zulu chiefs, and to inform them of the intentions of the English Government. Some scenes of the recent disasters were passed on the road. The marvel of how a large hostile army could have remained in the vicinity of Isandula unnoticed grows upon Colley:

> The more one sees the ground, the more unintelligible the whole affair is—not only that such a force as was left in camp could not make a better stand on ground exceptionally favourable to defence, but also that everybody should have been unaware of the approaching Zulu army and its force, and in entire ignorance of what was taking place in camp, seeing that the whole country is such that half a dozen well-posted scouts could have seen everything for twenty miles round.[5]

As they ride by the field of Isandula, 'the great peak, standing up as a monument over the scene of that terrible slaughter,' strikes him as deeply impressive. 'From some points of view it is more like a gigantic column than a mountain,' and all its gloomy significance is heightened 'by the *débris* of the camp and of the battle' still remaining at its foot. Before the party reached Ulundi, a wild storm broke at night upon the camp; the loss of draught oxen was enormous, the tents were blown to pieces. 'As soon as it was daylight,' wrote Colley, 'I turned

[5] Fort Marshall, August 5, 1879, to his wife.

out, and a queer sight it was; about two-thirds of the camp was blown down, the people scrambling among the ruins for their kits. I went to Sir Garnet's tent, and found him, jolly as ever, holding on to his tent-pole with might and main, and laughing heartily.' Then follows a passage illustrating those hazards of South African transport which sixteen months later were to aggravate so seriously the difficulties of his last enterprise:

> But a visit to the camp of Clarke's column was no laughing matter. The oxen had died literally in hundreds. On the exposed side of the camp whole teams were lying dead just as they had stood at the trek-trow. I believe the total loss of oxen during the last twenty-four hours will not be less than about 500 out of 3,000. The rain continued most of the day, but the wind moderated, and it is now breaking, and we are settling ourselves for the night, still wet to the skin but comparatively comfortable, and on the whole very jolly.[6]

'How I wish,' he writes a little later, 'I could give you some of my day-dreaming faculty! Under the most uncomfortable and depressing circumstances I can often spend a delightful time by just letting my mind wander over the scene of the pleasantest days of the past—or build castles for the future.'[7]

Ulundi was reached, and the search for Cetewayo began. Light columns were sent out in many directions, everybody was keen to catch the king, but for a fortnight the hunt went on without result. At length, on August 28, a small party of King's Dragoon Guards, under Major Marter, surrounded a kraal lying in a deep valley between table-topped hills in the

[6] Camp Entazaneni, August 8, 1879, to his wife.
[7] Ulundi, August 31, 1879, to his wife.

N'gome Forest, and succeeded in capturing the Zulu monarch. Writing on September 3, Colley thus describes the royal captive:

The meeting with the chiefs passed off very well two days ago, though they looked queer trying to 'make their marks' to the documents in which they pledged themselves to abide by the conditions imposed on them. Cetewayo passed through the day before. Not the least the enormous bloated savage I had imagined, or like any portraits I had ever seen, but a singularly fine-looking man, very large in the thighs, as most of that family are, but not corpulent, with a very calm, stately, and almost royal manner, and a pleasant face much above the usual Kaffir's. I must say I feel very sorry for him. But there is no help for it, and the country will gain very much by his removal. I fancy for a savage he was not cruel, and rather restrained than encouraged cruelty as such. But such absolute power in the hands of a savage must always necessarily entail a horrible amount of cruelty.

We are keeping our time excellently so far. I allowed two months for Zululand. I arrived on July 9 and we shall probably cross the border on September 9, and I hope we shall finish off Secucuni and the Transvaal with equal punctuality.[8]

Almost with the news of the capture of the Zulu king, had come the particulars of the Afghan 'Gazette.' 'I have seen the Afghan "Gazette,"' he writes in the same letter, 'and am delighted with the distinction made in favour of Lyall and Cavagnari.' Colley too had received his reward, and was now a Knight Commander of the Star of India.

I was very much interested with your account of Cavagnari. I rather feel for him myself, as I can well understand the longing for rest that must have come over him after that prolonged and most severe strain. I trust,

[8] Ulundi, to his wife.

however, that he will be able to pull through the next few months, and bring Yakub down to visit the Viceroy in the cold weather; and then I think he might well go home for six months or so, and come in for a little lionising and general freshening up.[9]

This was on September 9. Already when he wrote the outbreak at Kabul had taken place. Sir Louis Cavagnari, and most of his escort, had been massacred by the Afghan soldiery.

Cetewayo captured, and Zululand quiet, the camp at Ulundi had broken up and moved slowly towards the Transvaal: that border once crossed, the state of political feeling there soon became apparent. On September 16, the Commander-in-Chief and staff are at Standerton; Colley takes advantage of the halt to write to Cavagnari, and after congratulating him upon the 'Gazette,' and 'upon the account which I see in the papers of your successful journey and brilliant reception at Kabul,' turns to the Transvaal question:

We are now on a tour through the Transvaal, where the Boers, or rather a small and noisy section, are protesting very violently against the annexation. I think, however, there is a large amount of common sense and appreciation of self-interest in most of the Dutch population, and, considering the almost hopeless state of bankruptcy they had reached, and the depreciation of all property, they will not be sorry to see a strong and settled government under which resources will be developed, and the value of their property raised. There are, however, a certain number of obstinate, almost fanatical, old Dutchmen, whom one cannot help rather admiring, and who will sacrifice everything, and abandon their farms, rather than live under the British flag, or, indeed, under any form of government but their own.

[9] Conference Hill, to his wife.

These, I hope, will decide on emigrating, and we shall do all we can to facilitate such a move.

This singular letter, written from the near neighbourhood of the scene of Transvaal tragedy so soon to be, to the man whose life had already closed in even darker tragedy at Kabul, ends with a 'good-bye for the present,' a hope of 'meeting again in India,' a wish for 'every success in your most difficult work,' and the final expression of having 'a sort of feeling that you cannot fail, which gives me more confidence in the stability of our arrangements than I should, perhaps, otherwise have.'

A little earlier, on September 6, Lady Colley had written to her husband in Natal, describing the receipt at Simla of the news of the Kabul massacre, and the effect upon the Viceroy and his circle of this sudden reversal of the anticipations founded on the Treaty of Gandamak:

This is a terrible day; all seems one terrible time since yesterday afternoon, when Lady L. told me the dreadful rumour that the Residency at Kabul had been attacked by the populace, that the man had left Kabul at that stage, and did not know the end. At dinner came a telegram confirming this, so far as the fact that a severe cross-examination of the man, only eliciting the same tale, could confirm it. We were a small party—the Barnetts, Lady Anne Kerr, and Colonel Stansfeld—no A.D.C.'s, and Sir Michael Kennedy the only guest. But he and the others knew nothing of what was going on, so we had to keep up appearances, even when the look that passed over H.E.'s face when he read the telegram told us pretty well that there was little hope left. Then, just at the end of dinner (which was half an hour earlier for the theatre), in came Z., talking in gallant style—but a look about his eyes which to me made it ghastly. Nothing was to be shown as yet, so Lady L. went to the

theatre with Mrs. Barnett and Sir Ashley. I was so thankful I had declined before; I don't think I could have sat through it. I heard no more until this morning, when a letter came from Lady L. telling me it was all true; when she was coming home last night, about 1 o'clock, she met Z., he passed without a look or word or bow, and she knew worse news had come. She got up to Lord L. and found it was a letter from the Amir (telegraphed on, I fancy) describing how some soldiers had mutinied, stoned their officers, then collected and marched to the Residency, where they were received with bullets as they stoned the building. The Amir sent Daud Shah to help our people.[1] He was ill treated, and is dying; then the Amir sent his son to try and disperse the crowd, but in vain, and they had set fire to the Residency and he did not know what had become of our envoy. He himself was besieged, Afghanistan was ruined.

The rest of the telegram only came to-day, but I will give it here. He implores for help and advice, declares his loyalty, and says he has lost his very best friend in the envoy.

It was an awful night. Lord L. was deeply affected; it was the horror of Cavagnari's fate which overcame him. But in a few moments he pulled himself together. . . .

To-day before dinner came the full horrible reality which somehow I had not fully faced before, always secretly thinking he might have got away somehow: 'A further telegram has just come confirming all, and a further witness has even found the bodies of envoy and escort.' The resistance seems to have been very great, and many Kabulis killed, but no numbers are given; the porch only of the Residency was burnt, but the whole place entered and sacked.

Oh, Geordie, it is all too dreadful! I sometimes think I feel it more than any one except perhaps Z. Cavagnari's face haunts me, and all our last talks, and the poor little wife at home.[2]

Terrible although this tragedy at Kabul was, it

[1] This first account of the Amir's conduct was not confirmed afterwards.

[2] Simla, September 6, 1879, from his wife.

remains a fair subject for argument whether the death of Cavagnari need have carried all the consequences which were allowed to result after Lord Lytton's resignation. It should in justice be recognised that the murder of an envoy does not necessarily involve the condemnation of the policy he represented, and that all such questions may claim to be judged on wider considerations.

I find Sir Frederick Roberts writing to Colley from Simla on August 17:

> Cavagnari is doing well at Kabul, and I am very hopeful all will go on quietly there; but with so many discordant elements and with several fanatical Mollahs preaching sedition, there may of course be a row any day. I went with Cavagnari to the top of the Shutargardan, and there made him over to the officials sent by the Amir to receive him. Nothing could have been more satisfactory than the arrangements made by Yakub Khan for the reception of the embassy. . . So long as affairs go on smoothly at Kabul there will be no trouble at Kuram, but any row to the north of the Shutargardan would be the signal for a general disturbance. For this reason I am anxious to have a certain portion of the Kuram column equipped with mule carriage, ready to move off at short notice.

Long before the letter reached its destination, the 'row' had taken place, and the Kuram column was in movement against Kabul.

When the news from Kabul was confirmed, Lord Lytton, on September 6, telegraphed to Colley to return to India. The summons took three weeks to reach South Africa. By that time he had arrived at Pretoria, with his chief, and was there busily engaged upon the political problems of the Transvaal.

> Since my last was written, we have had rather an interesting meeting with Mr. Joubert, for a short time President

of the Transvaal, and the leader of the ultra-Boer and anti-annexation party. Sir Garnet had sent him an invitation to come and lunch with him, when we were halted in the neighbourhood of his farm. Mr. Joubert did not get the invitation in time, but sent a civil reply expressing his desire to wait on Sir Garnet, and a meeting at Standerton was accordingly arranged. He lunched with us, and afterwards we had a business talk in presence of two or three Dutchmen and some of our staff. He spoke well and earnestly; maintained his unchangeable opinion that the annexation was unjust and unnecessary, and that if England had endeavoured to assist instead of endeavouring to embarrass the young and struggling State, none of the pleas for annexation would ever have arisen; and declared that nothing would ever reconcile him or make him in any way acquiesce in a measure which he believed to be as injurious to the country as it was uncalled for.

Sir Garnet did little more than allude to the causes of annexation, which he said was final and irrevocable, and could not be further discussed by him; said that he and the British Government were satisfied that it was for the true interests of the people, by a majority of whom it had been sought and welcomed; that the discontent was mainly owing to the factious and interested opposition of the few; and that he counted on the support of the leading and influential men among them to discourage this agitation (which must tell against the prosperity of the country), and help him in the administration, and in bringing about a state of things which would admit of the Government being made an entirely free one, and placed in the hands of elected representatives as in the Cape Colony. He also appealed strongly to Joubert personally to help in this. But Joubert repeatedly and emphatically refused to take any share in furthering a course which he did and always should protest against, and said he would look on himself, and would be looked upon by his countrymen, as a traitor to his country if he ever did so.

He spoke courteously and deferentially to Sir Garnet personally (he had been threatening and insolent to Sir Bartle Frere, but on that occasion he had 3,000 armed Boers

at his back while Sir Bartle was without even an escort; on this occasion Sir Garnet had the force at his back and Joubert was alone), and with a certain ring of patriotism which would have been more telling but that we knew Joubert had taken advantage of his short tenure of the Presidency to further his own pecuniary interests, in a way that scandalised even the long-suffering Dutchmen. And as his great ambition has been to hold the Presidency, and our interference had put that or any high political post out of the question, he was bound to be in opposition.

Some pretty good fencing took place, in which Joubert showed better than I expected. In reply to some hint at our greed for annexation and extension of territory, Sir Garnet pointed to Zululand as a proof that so little did we desire to increase our territory and responsibilities that, when it lay prostrate and conquered at our feet, we did not take a single inch, but gave it all back to them. To this Joubert retorted that in doing so we had inflicted an additional and deeper insult on the Boers, to whom we refused the right to manage their own affairs and live unmolested by us, which we conceded to the savage and plundering Zulus. I think Sir Garnet was rather sorry for his allusion to the Zulu settlement!

On the other hand, when Joubert alluded to some addresses which had been presented, and interviews which Sir Garnet had had, and said he must not be deceived by such apparent acquiescence, as many who would not dispute with him and might even seem to agree with him would be as determined as ever in their opposition after they had left him, Sir Garnet replied that he was sorry to hear Mr. Joubert thus lowering his countrymen in an Englishman's eyes, and that his (Sir Garnet's) opinion and experience was more favourable to them, as he believed that they generally spoke out frankly their real opinions whether they were favourable or unfavourable.

The interview ended amicably enough with assurances that differences of opinion would not affect their mutual respect and friendly feeling, coupled, however, with a just perceptible hint that Mr. Joubert must not act too far

on his divergent views. But it led to nothing but what we had already anticipated—namely, that Joubert would prefer his position in the country as leader of the Dutch opposition to anything we could offer him. I believe that the maxim that every man has his price would apply to him if we had a sufficiently high price to offer him, but we can offer him nothing so good as what he has always had before his eyes and has not yet altogether given up hopes of.

In a couple of days more we shall be at Heidelberg, and perhaps in a position to gauge better the amount of opposition to be expected in the country, as the great meeting has been summoned there for the 24th. I am inclined to think, however, that in face of the military force which has now been collected, the meeting will not be very largely attended, as all the waverers, who attended before because the Dutch opposition seemed the strongest, and they were afraid of the consequences to themselves if the Boer Government got the upper hand, or the country was restored by us, will now think our side is looking up, and be careful to stay away.

I hope when we have been at Pretoria a week or so we shall be able to decide as to the movement of the remaining cavalry regiment to India, and that will probably govern my movements also.[3]

A week later at Pretoria there seemed no better prospect of moving the remaining cavalry regiment from the Transvaal. But Colley had received Lord Lytton's telegram, and on September 29 the following general order was published by Sir Garnet Wolseley: 'The services of Brigadier-General Sir George Colley, K.C.S.I., C.B., C.M.G., having been applied for by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, the General Commanding, in view of the urgency of the demand, has no alternative but to allow Brigadier-General Sir George Colley to return to his duties as Private Secretary to the Viceroy.' Then followed expressions of regret at his departure, and of testimony to his

[3] September 21, 1879, to his wife.

services, as strong as words could make them. 'No words could too strongly express,' ran the order, 'the value of the assistance he has rendered since his arrival in this command, or the advantage which the General Commanding has derived from his sound military and political judgment in the concluding operations of the Zulu War and the final settlement of the country.'

And so he started on his road to India—down again along the veldt track into Natal, by Lang's Nek, under the shadow of Majuba Mountain, past Ingogo, until at Durban, on October 8, he took ship to India. This was the fourth time of his leaving South Africa. In less than ten months he would return to that well-known land—not to leave it any more.

CHAPTER XIII

NATAL

Accepts appointment as Governor, High Commissioner, and Commander-in-Chief in South-Eastern Africa—A brief spell of home—General election of 1880—The Boers and annexation—Inspection of Transvaal garrisons—The Administrator's letters to Colley—Proclamation of the Boer Republic—Bronkerspruit.

THE letter from Sir Frederick Roberts quoted in the last chapter contains the following passage:

Few people know as well as I do how much you did to make the recent campaign a success, and how well you deserve the honour you received. I hope it will be followed by more honours for the Zulu War, and then I dare say you would not mind having a rest to prepare for the next campaign, when you must have a command of your own.

During quite four years Colley's life had been one of ceaseless activity. The voyage from Natal to India—the deck chair and the blue line of sea horizon—may have afforded a welcome rest. But a note-book kept during the voyage shows that his idea of rest was far removed from idleness. The notes on many subjects, some professional, others literary and speculative, prove the variety of his interests and the wide range of his thought.

When he reached India early in November 1879 the second Afghan campaign had begun. In October General Roberts crossed the Shutargardan, fought at Charasia, and entered Kabul. Everybody knows

what followed. The gathering of the clans round Kabul, the break-up of the Afghan league, the march of Sir Donald Stewart from Kandahar to Kabul, and that of Sir Frederick Roberts from Kabul to Kandahar; the proof growing stronger day by day that the greater part of Afghanistan was a bleak and barren wilderness of rock and mountain, with a climate fatal to Indian men and Indian animals, and with a people as true to the traditions of war, rapine, and freedom as they had ever been in the long two thousand years since history first tells of them.

The renewal of active operations in Afghanistan had caused disappointment at home, while an exceptionally bad harvest and the prospect of agrarian trouble in Ireland set the mind of the nation still more out of joint with its governors. The Parliament of 1874, which had placed Lord Beaconsfield in office with such a commanding majority, was dying in its sixth session, the victim of many misfortunes. Parliament was dissolved in March 1880, and in April the general election placed the Liberals in power. 'The stars in their courses have fought against us,' wrote Lord Beaconsfield, and not the least hostile among the constellations had been those which watch over the destinies of South Africa.

A month before the dissolution, the Governorship of Natal had been offered to Colley by the Home Government. He was also to succeed Sir Garnet Wolseley as High Commissioner of South-Eastern Africa, including the Transvaal, and as Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Natal and the Transvaal.[1] He accepted the offer conditionally upon getting a short leave of absence home. At a farewell dinner in

[1] With local rank of Major-General.

Calcutta on February 28, Lord Lytton spoke—as few could speak—touching words of congratulation and good-bye. The same evening Sir George and Lady Colley left Calcutta.

'You will find them at home in the thick of the general election,' wrote the Viceroy a few days later, 'and I hope to hear from you your impression of the whole political situation and prospects in England. Adieu, my dear and true friend. I miss you every hour more than I can say, but—good heavens! how much one must be resigned to miss more and more as life goes on! Like Falstaff, I would it were bed-time and all were over.' The wished-for rest was soon to come. The change of Ministry at home meant a change of Viceroy in India. In a letter written by Lord Lytton just before he left Bombay, a name occurs already great among those who knew it. With Lord Ripon, Charles Gordon had come out to India as private secretary. As everybody knows, he resigned this appointment a day or two after reaching Bombay. A hundred reasons were imagined for what seemed such sudden change of mind. Among the varied causes, one given by Lord Lytton was at least novel:

You will doubtless have seen Gordon's extraordinary letter about his resignation of the private secretaryship. He is now on his way to the Celestial Empire, which is, I suppose, the next best thing in his estimation to the Kingdom of Heaven. He was much cut up by being told to write a letter to Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeeboy, informing him that Lord Ripon had read with much pleasure and interest a pamphlet sent him by that portentous Parsee. This, he said, was making him tell a lie, since he well knew that Lord Ripon had not read the pamphlet at all. Let us hope that a 'mysterious Providence' has reserved him for the command of a victorious Chinese campaign against the Russians.

But the reservation was for other purpose.

The incoming Liberal Ministry did not disturb the appointment of Governor of Natal made by their predecessors in office, and, after a stay of two months in England, Colley started for his destination, new to him only in the sense of its new responsibilities, to exercise at last in his own name all the well-wrought faculties hitherto used for others.

As Commander-in-Chief, Governor, and High Commissioner, the total emoluments of his office were fixed at an unusually high figure. None of the felicitations and expressions of goodwill usual upon success in life had been wanting on this occasion. He had been the guest of the Queen at Windsor, the guest of the Colonial Office at a large public dinner in London, the recipient of many congratulatory addresses from public bodies and of private letters and messages beyond number.

He reached the Cape on June 17, and Natal a week later. The old idea of a confederated South Africa had again been formulated, only to be again doomed to disappointment. The opposition of the Boers had mainly frustrated this new attempt. Nevertheless, the general situation throughout South Africa was not regarded as critical. The troubles of the past years appeared to be subsiding, and it was generally believed that an era of peace and prosperity had set in. But the last gust of the storm which had begun three years earlier on the Bashee River had yet to come, and was to prove the fiercest and most fatal in the record. Even now the horizon was not quite unclouded. In Zululand the thirteen kinglets set up in the place of Cetewayo were already disposed to quarrel amongst themselves, and the

natives of Basutoland were soon to rise in revolt against the law of disarmament enforced by order of Sir Bartle Frere. Natal, however, satiated by the prodigious expenditure of the recent war, was politically tranquil. The Transvaal, too, was quiet, although from after events it would seem that the slowly generated forces of Dutch discontent must already have approached a stage which only wanted a spark of accident to raise the people in revolt.

Three years had passed since the annexation in April 1877. Much had happened since. The Zulu power, which had been a menace to the Transvaal, was broken for ever, the native troubles in other directions were settled at British expense, the finances were in a better condition, and the experience as yet obtained of English administration had not been such as to allay natural antipathy to an alien rule. There had been deputations of Boer leaders to England protesting against the annexation; assemblages *en masse* of the people at various places for the same purpose; petitions to the Administrator, to Sir Bartle Frere, to the Government of England, and to the Throne. To all these remonstrances there had come but one response: the annexation was an accomplished fact—it could not be undone. But other results had followed upon the attitude so doggedly maintained by the Boers. Their cause had found countenance and support outside the ranks of the Home Government, and many thinking men besides Mr. Froude were inclined to sympathise with them. Events, too, had been fighting for them. The Liberal party in opposition had not been slow to champion a cause damaging to their political opponents, and apparently safe to themselves. If the Dutch

people throughout South Africa believed that the advent to power of the Liberal party in 1880 meant the return to the Boers of the independence taken from them in 1877, such belief had the justification that censure of the annexation was a notable plank in the 'platform' upon which the general election had been fought and won.

We can judge, then, the feelings with which the Dutch population, not only of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, but throughout South Africa, received the intelligence that the Liberal Government, on assuming the reins of authority, had deliberately resolved to maintain the annexation—a decision which at once placed them in a position infinitely more difficult than that of their predecessors in office, who had at least pretended to regard the annexation as an act approved by a majority of the white inhabitants of the Transvaal; while the present possessors of power had long repudiated any such pretension, and had openly avowed their belief in the injustice of that measure. The feelings of the Boers became more than ever exasperated at finding themselves the dupes of the new Government, as before they had considered themselves the victims of the old.

This situation produced difficulties of another kind, almost as serious as the increased discontent it had awakened. To justify in some sense their continuation of a policy they had so often denounced in their predecessors, the Government had at least to show that they ruled the Transvaal by the wish of the people, and that it was not a costly possession held by force alone. They had, in fact, to make it pay. Military expenditure must be reduced, taxes collected.

And this necessity to produce for home consumption a contented taxpaying Transvaal pressed still more heavily upon the officials on the spot.

It was unfortunate for Colley that his arrival in Natal to assume the duties of High Commissioner of the Transvaal should have synchronised with renewed exasperation of the Boers' feelings, and with the other complicating elements here so briefly sketched. Unfortunate, too, were the number of the offices to which he had been appointed, and the conflicting duties they imposed upon him. Natal and Zululand were directly under his charge; the Transvaal—at the moment by far the most important spot in all the dominions of the Empire—was his only in a secondary degree; everything that came to him thence, or went from him thither, had to pass through another officer, Sir Owen Lanyon, the Administrator of that territory.

In this duality and division of directing authority lay the chief danger of the situation, and doubly was it dangerous when the contrasted characters of the two men, High Commissioner and Administrator, were taken into account. The vital want in the condition of affairs then existing in the Transvaal was, in one word, sympathy. The Boers were being goaded into desperation by an absence of that essential quality between them and their rulers. When Sir Bartle Frere had met the Boers at the mass meeting in 1879, it was said that he told them that their grievances were groundless and that their desire for independence was only 'tall talk.' Far more contemptuous epithets were daily thrown at them in the market-places or village centres, where they came in contact with the 'Uitlanders' of those days; and over and over again the

taunt was flung at them that, speak sedition as they might, they were nevertheless afraid to appeal to arms. This was the real explanation of all that optimist belief which is now so puzzling to read of. The Boers would not fight. It is a satire upon our civilisation that the old-fashioned ordeal of arms should still be required as a test of the sincerity and justice of a cause.

Sir George Colley, on the other hand, possessed many qualities of that higher order of human sympathy which is essential to the ruler of men. The Boers already knew him by name and character, they counted upon his friendship, and were deeply disappointed when they found that it bore no immediate fruit.

Not only were Transvaal matters to come to Colley at second hand, but his time and attention had, under the Home Government instructions, to be devoted to half a dozen other pressing questions. A new constitution for Natal, the native question in Zululand, the affairs of Griqualand East, the settlement of the long-standing dispute in Bechuanaland, known as the Keate award, the Delagoa Bay question, and many others, were cast into a sort of promiscuous portfolio of instruction to be sorted, arranged, solved, and settled at the earliest opportunity. When we look through the voluminous papers in which the several subjects were set forth, and turn from them to the few words written by Lady Colley in her notebook describing the day of arrival at Maritzburg, the brief entry acquires fresh significance: 'Thursday, July 1, Durban to Maritzburg—entered our home there—a plunge into chaos.' Chaos indeed it was to prove. It took about a month to get the several lines of labour disentangled and set out. That when they

were all laid bare the prospect was not encouraging may be gathered from the following letter:

I can see that I have plenty of hard work cut out for me, and plenty of difficult nuts to crack. Whether I shall be able to extricate myself fairly, or shall find that South Africa is to me, as it has been said to be in general, 'the grave of all good reputations,' remains to be seen. The people here are civil to me personally as far as I can judge, and well disposed, but bitterly hostile to Downing Street. Just now I am a little anxious about the Basuto disarmament, which seems likely to create a disturbance, but I sincerely trust we are not going to have more wars here.

I am off in a few days to visit the Transvaal and inspect our posts there, and thence on to the Keate award territory—the difficulties connected with which have for my sins been put upon my shoulders—returning through Kimberley and the Free State in time to meet my new council, which assembles about the end of September. I 'dissolved' a few days ago, and sincerely trust my dissolution may not be as fatal a one as was Lord Beaconsfield's![1]

Just before starting news reached him of the disaster at Maiwand; it was the beginning of the last act of the Afghan drama. The march from Kabul to Kandahar and the defeat of Ayub Khan had yet to be, and then the columns would move back to the Indus, bringing as trophy of toil and battle the name of one soldier made famous—Lord Roberts of Kandahar.

In the rapid journey just referred to, and undertaken six weeks after Colley's arrival in Natal, time did not allow of any close observation of the political situation in the Transvaal. He had to return to meet the new council in Natal in the latter part of September, and meanwhile the long-standing dispute of the Keate award must be closed, the Diamond fields

[1] Natal, July 25, 1880, to Major Macgregor.

and Orange Free State visited. One of the main objects of his inspection was to see how far the strongly expressed wishes of the Home Government relative to a reduction of the troops in the Transvaal could be carried into effect. Before setting out, he wrote to the Secretary of State for War:

I have been giving my best attention since my arrival here to the question of the reduction of the large military expenditure in the Transvaal, which I regret to say is even heavier than I had anticipated. I have already taken some steps towards the reduction of the transport, and of the large reserves of supplies which it was thought necessary to maintain in face of the threatened Boer combinations, and hope thereby to give our military chest some immediate relief. I am obliged to you, however, for not pressing me too much in this matter, and allowing me till September to consider my future arrangements, as by that time I hope to have personally visited the country, and shall be consequently in a much better position than I am now in to judge of the political condition of the country, and of its military requirements.[2]

Another letter, written from Pretoria six weeks later, speaks of his 'hurried tour of military inspection,' and reports his 'impressions of matters military and political in this country.'[3] Already the King's Dragoon Guards had, under orders from home, begun their march to Durban for embarkation to India; three battalions of infantry and a battery of artillery still remained in the Transvaal, and were to be dealt with as described below. The state of the garrisons was not satisfactory; desertion and discontent had reached an unprecedented height. The immediate result of his visit had been to bring these evils prominently before him.

[2] July 19, 1880, to Mr. Childers. [3] August 26, 1880, to the Duke.

The multiplicity of detachments and extreme dispersion of the artillery, interfering to a certain extent with the discipline, comfort, and efficiency of the troops, and entailing heavy additional expenditure in transport and establishments, seemed to me evils which it was desirable to correct as soon as the political condition of the country admitted of doing so. I am glad to say that since my arrival here I have been able, with the entire concurrence of Sir Owen Lanyon (the Administrator) and of Colonel Bellairs, commanding the troops, to arrange for the abandonment of three of these detachments—viz., Heidelberg, Middelberg, and Fort Albert. By this five companies will be set free to join the headquarters of their respective regiments. I have also ordered up the division R.A. now at Wakkerstroom to Pretoria, so that the headquarters and four guns of the battery will in future be here.

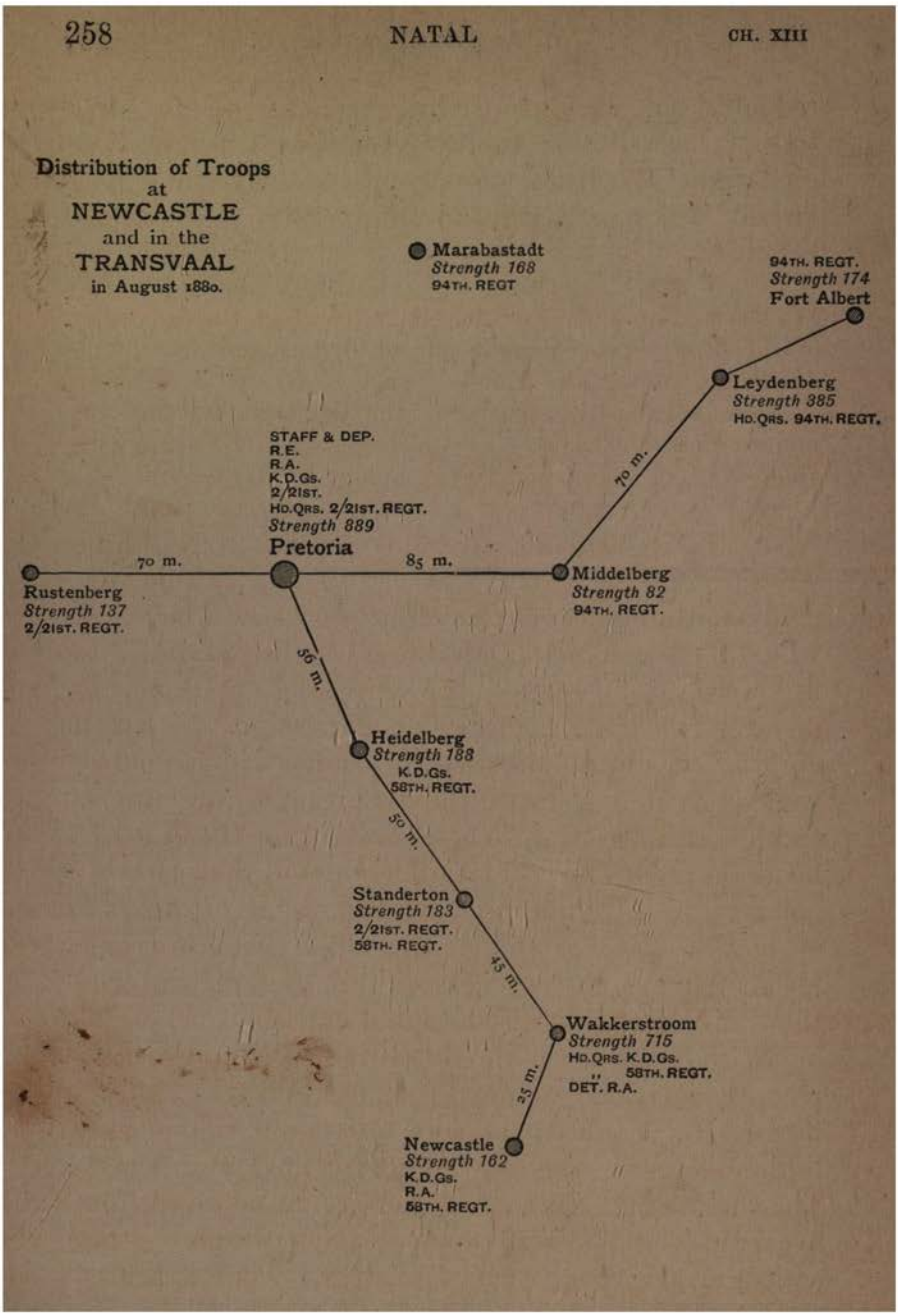
The political situation is still somewhat uncertain. Messrs. Joubert and Kruger, the Transvaal delegates, were very proud of the share they had in causing the failure of the confederation conference proposals at the Cape, but I think they are already beginning to be sorry for themselves; and though there is doubtless a bitterly hostile party, who care for nothing so much as to oppose and embarrass the British Government, there is also a much larger moderate party, who are beginning to see they have only injured their cause by the line taken about confederation. The Boer committee are again talking of mass meetings, &c., but I think the country generally is becoming rather tired of this agitation; and many who at first held aloof from us are now becoming friendly. The officers generally report that they find themselves well received by the Boers when they have occasion to visit them, and though there is a little 'shake hands to-day and fight to-morrow' style of talk, it seems rather put on for swagger than in earnest. In the course of the next two or three months we ought to be able to gauge more definitely the real power of the agitator, now that Joubert and Kruger have returned from their Cape mission, and should that power not turn out greater than I anticipate, I hope, in accordance with what I understand to be

the wishes of . . . , to effect a further reduction of one regiment in the Transvaal.

My views are that under any circumstances it will be necessary for some time to come to maintain at Pretoria a full regiment of infantry, a detachment of mounted men, and four guns R.A., so that a column of all arms, with not less than 500 infantry, can be formed and moved out if necessary. Besides this there are certain out-stations, such as Wakkerstroom, Leydenberg, and Marabastadt, &c., which must be held by detachments, and these will require a second regiment.[4]

A diagram giving the distribution and strength of the Transvaal garrisons at the moment of Colley's inspection will serve to show their scattered and far extended nature. Strong at no point, they were weak all along the line, which, taken from north to south, and east to west, was more than 600 miles in length. But weakness was not the only characteristic. The cost was excessive. The food supplies which were copper on the coast, or in Natal, had become gold by the time they had reached the distant posts of Leydenberg and Marabastadt. More fatal still was the effect which this dispersed situation, the aimlessness of existence in these remote stations, and the whole nature of the life there had upon the morale of the troops—their spirit, discipline, and efficiency as soldiers. If the Boers really held the ideas which we shall find imputed to them later on by Sir Owen Lanyon, as to the probable defection of the troops to their side, there was certainly some reason for their opinion. Desertion was rife in the Transvaal. The High Commissioner's letters are full of reference to this crime. He speaks of its excessive prevalence as one of the principal reasons for

[4] August 26, 1880, to the Duke.


Distribution of Troops
at
NEWCASTLE
and in the
TRANSVAAL
in August 1880.
Marabastadt
Strength 168
94TH. REGT
94TH. REGT.
Strength 174
Fort Albert
Leydenberg
Strength 385
HD. QRS. 94TH. REGT.
70 m.
STAFF & DEP.
R.E.
R.A.
K.D.Gs.
2/21ST.
HD. QRS. 2/21ST. REGT.
Strength 889
Pretoria
70 m.
85 m.
Rustenberg
Strength 137
2/21ST. REGT.
Middelberg
Strength 82
94TH. REGT.
56 m.
Heidelberg
Strength 188
K.D.Gs.
58TH. REGT.
50 m.
Standerton
Strength 183
2/21ST. REGT.
58TH. REGT.
45 m.
Wakkerstroom
Strength 715
HD. QRS. K.D.Gs.
" 58TH. REGT.
DET. R.A.
35 m.
Newcastle
Strength 162
K.D.Gs.
R.A.
58TH. REGT.

reducing the strength of the garrison. 'I am sorry to say,' he writes to the Secretary of State for War on August 25, 'they (the troops) are deserting very largely.' Again, writing to a high military personage, he says:

> The principal offence is desertion, to which the proximity of the Free State offers a strong inducement. . . . The desertions among the King's Dragoon Guards have been exceptionally heavy, especially since the regiment was put under orders for India. . . . One sergeant went away with about 200*l.* of troop and canteen money.

Again, in October, after his return to Natal, he wrote to the Secretary for War: 'I am writing officially on the subject of the desertions in the Transvaal, which have reached an alarming number, and add to my anxiety to reduce the garrisons as much as possible. I have made recommendations for small additions to the soldiers' ration, which will be money well spent if it reduces the desertion to any appreciable extent.' And to the Secretary for the Colonies he again mentions 'the terrible amount of desertion' going on in the Transvaal. Little wonder if, in face of such a state of things, the Boers held sanguine ideas of being able successfully to meet in the field those dispersed and discontented garrisons.

With regard to all these facts, opinions, and recommendations, we must bear in mind that Colley's hurried tour could enable him to judge only in a very limited degree of the real feelings of the Dutch Boers. The chief centres of their power lay far removed from his route—he had still to hear them through other ears, and see them with other eyes. Time appeared to him to be on the side of peace. Above all he was

meditating a new scheme by which a large measure of representative government would be given to the Boers, and he had determined upon making, before the year closed, a second visit to the Transvaal, when, after thoroughly examining the political situation in all its bearings, he would announce to the Boers their new constitution. It is very certain that in August 1880, the outward aspect of the Transvaal gave no indication of the deep and strong forces then moving below the surface. The rapid military tour presented no feature throughout its progress that seemed to justify a reversal of the decision already arrived at in England, that the King's Dragoon Guards should quit the country.

The concentration of isolated infantry detachments improved the military situation, and the withdrawal to Natal of part of one infantry battalion, the 58th, was also an advantage. We shall see later on that the question in relation to infantry was not their numbers but their mobility. By withdrawing a portion of the 58th from the Transvaal and retaining it as he did in Natal, Colley's position was the stronger when the moment came for protecting the colony and attempting the relief of the beleaguered posts. In the immense area of the Transvaal, with long and almost trackless spaces separating the military positions from each other, stronger infantry garrisons would have added to the difficulties of the situation. Their supplies and, above all, their power of movement would only have been the more defective.

In the private letters which Colley wrote during his Transvaal visit he constantly recurs to the physical difficulties presented by the country and the climate. These bring before us many of the obstacles which

had to be encountered in the progress of the military operations so soon to be undertaken over these same desolate expanses. From Biggarsberg he writes:

Our journey so far has been rather under difficulties from the weather. Each night we have failed to reach our destination, and been benighted and obliged to put up in some wretched wayside shanty. We started yesterday with the promise of rather a specially fine day, but it soon turned into a gale, blowing straight behind us, and which raised such clouds of dust round us that we had several times to pull up to see where we were going. Often we could not see the leaders' heads. About 5 o'clock the wind had brought up a driving mist, but we pushed on after dinner; as the mist seemed to clear and we thought we should have a little moon. However, a mile outside Estcourt we lost our road and the mist came on thicker than ever, making it pitch dark. After various attempts to arrange lights, and very often getting off the road, the only way we could get on at all was by Wilkinson and Palmer walking in front of the horses' heads with a lamp; even so we often got astray, and had great difficulty in making six miles, which brought us to a small wayside store where we got a cup of tea and slept very sound. . . .

To-day it came on a regular heavy fall of snow, sufficient soon to cover the whole country some inches deep, and we worked with difficulty through it to this place. By the way, it is a curious coincidence that this is the same day as the heavy storm we had last year, near Ulundi, which blew down so many tents and killed so many oxen.[5]

The adventures related in a letter written from Fort Albert a week later give a further insight into the difficulties of Transvaal travelling, and show how little accustomed to the rough ways of the veldt were the soldiers then stationed in that country.

We started from Leydenberg with very nice horses and

[5] August 1, 1880, to his wife.

over an excellent road. A sergeant had been detailed to accompany and guide us. After riding about fifteen miles, it struck me that the road was growing very unlike what I had been led to expect, and that we were plunging into a very deep and broken valley, while the direction seemed wrong. I called up the sergeant, who then placidly admitted that for the last few miles he had felt afraid we were off the road. He evidently had absolutely no eye for country, although he had travelled the road before, so I was afraid to try any line across the country, which was rough and broken, and set to work to retrace our steps. After a time we came to a man wood-cutting, who pointed out a track which would take us in the direction of the right road. After another mile or two this brought us to a farm which the sergeant declared to be the one he was to take us to, where we should find the change of horses, but which of course turned out to be a totally different one, about ten miles from the right one. Here we struck a track which clearly led in the right direction, and did ultimately lead into the right road. Then we cantered along gaily for a time, congratulating ourselves on not having lost more by the mistake, when suddenly we discovered that the sergeant, who was following us with our led horse and all our little comforts and supplies, was missing. We accordingly started off the road again to search for him, and ultimately discovered him wandering round and round a small hill immediately overlooking the farm which we had left an hour or two ago, and trying to find a path down, under the impression that this time he had really hit off the right farm! I could not have believed it possible for a man to be such an idiot![6]

Shift the scene here described to one which took place four months later on this same Leydenberg-Pretoria road, and it is not difficult to forecast the result of an encounter between adepts in every trick of the wilderness, and a couple of hundred soldiers as

[6] To his wife.

little versed in wild warfare as was this specially selected sergeant.

By September 15, Colley was back at Maritzburg again. He had seen the Transvaal garrisons, visited Bechuanaland, pronounced on the Keate award, met the President of the Orange Free State at Bloemfontein, and written many official despatches *en route*. 'I have been doing a fearful amount of writing during these last two days,' he had written from Bloemhof, 'and have worked my A.D.C. nearly stupid with copying.'[7] And in another letter about the same date: 'Just at present I am listening to the rival claims of Bloemhof and Christiana to be recognised as the capital—Bloemhof having fifteen houses and having once had a resident doctor, while Christiana has eleven houses and a watercourse; both are about as wretched-looking places as can well be conceived, swept by every wind and buried in dust storms!'

During this tour news had reached him of the change of Governors at the Cape.

> I was very sorry to hear of Sir Bartle Frere's recall. I had seen much of him and met with much kindness from him during our stay at Capetown, and though I might not agree with him on all points, I think we should have worked together very pleasantly; while his wide knowledge of things and people in South Africa was always at my service and very useful. I was sorry for his hit at the Zulu settlement in his closing speech, but he has no more love for that than Sir Garnet has for the Basuto disarmament! . . . The thoughtful courtesy of himself and his family, coupled with the boundless hospitality of Government House, had given him a popularity which will rather handicap his successor.[8]

And now at Maritzburg there came a brief period

[7] August 30, 1880, to his wife. [8] August 9, 1880, to Lord Kimberley.

of comparative quiet. It was very pleasant to get back from these wind- and dust-swept wastes to the home in Natal, which had now been made bright and comfortable. The following reference to this time of calm before the storm occurs in a note written by Lady Colley:

I think it was on September 15 that he returned from the Transvaal, and the three succeeding months were, I think, on the whole the happiest of our married life—we often said they were—but perhaps that was only because they were the present. For with us the past seemed to pale continually in the ever growing brightness of our daily life. Still there was much in our circumstances to make us extra happy then. To George the change was a welcome one from the often trying position of an irresponsible adviser to that of a responsible ruler, with power—or at all events such semblance of power as is allowed to man—of working out what he planned. He possessed that attribute of rulers, a gift of influencing men, which can effect so much in positions where authority is at once considerable and yet limited. Though far too modest to think much about any of his faculties, yet he could not be insensible to the pleasure of exercising, for the first time freely, this power of swaying his fellow men—a power justified by the exceptional calibre of his mind, but telling just as strongly in quarters where mere intellectual force might have passed unperceived. The outcome it was of his whole nature. In the minds of the men immediately about him there grew up an unquestioning trust alike in his judgment and in his character—a feeling that with him mistake or failure was impossible.

His mind was one on which former interests left indelible traces, and it was partly from association with his early years in South Africa that the climate, the country, the flowers, drew the special charm they had for him. Often now do I recall, with self-reproach and vain regret, some occasion when he would be a little disappointed at failing to make me join in high appreciation of one or other of these;

for at first I had some odd unaccountable dislike to Maritzburg, which now seems to me an unconscious foreshadowing of trouble; but soon, when we had made our home nice and cosy, and the earlier difficulties had subsided, as the dust did with the first rain, I grew very fond of the place. It became part of our life, the scenery of our happiness, and we praised it together many a time.

So ran these pleasant home days all through October and November, till in December the rapidly darkening cloud of Transvaal trouble began to break over South Africa.

As October and November 1880 ran their course, the Transvaal note is more frequently sounded in the long refrain of South African administration. But it is still far from being a note of alarm. So little apprehension exists in the governing mind at Pretoria that the Administrator there is writing about his success in raising the taxes, about raising a corps for service in Basutoland, about his own prospects of getting leave of absence to England, all through the month of October. On the 25th of that month he refers, indeed, to the political feeling of the Boers, but it is only to emphasise still more strongly the opinion that there is no real cause for apprehension. The sentence is worth quoting:

Some of the good folk here are beginning to cry out 'Wolf, wolf,' about the coming mass meeting, but they have done so on every similar occasion. I don't feel any anxiety about it, and if the people will only let them alone, they [the Boers] will do nothing. Several have come to me and said, 'Oh, you must not allow it and you must put your foot down!' Nothing would play their game better than if we made any martyrs, and all that the movers want is to get the Government to do something which 'would make some

heart indignant break, to show that still she (Transvaal, not Erin) lives.' . . .

To-day we are in the midst of our first municipal elections, and there is great excitement in town. These local self-governing bodies are useful counter-irritants and assist in bringing about the principle of easy government, which is here more strongly than elsewhere *Divide et impera.*'[9]

On November 7, he reported the departure of 285 volunteers for the Basuto War, whither, too, a couple of Whitworth guns had been despatched from Pretoria. Not until November 27 did the letters of the Administrator give any indication of coming trouble. The first disturbance at Potchefstroom had then occurred, and a very significant one it had been; but still it did not appear to the Administrator to be more than a passing cloud.

The leaders are keeping carefully in the background, but they are not, as heretofore, prominent in advising the people to *wait*. The fact is they don't know what to advise now that they have had the final reply that neither Conservatives nor Liberals will give them back the country; and if they say 'Accept the situation' they feel that their names will be blackened all round, for none are more ready to brand others as cowards than cowards. If they say 'Fight' they know they will ruin themselves and put a rope round their necks, so they are in a regular fix. . . . But there is a danger in all this, and it is certainly greater than any that we have yet had to deal with. If 4,000 or 5,000 excited men get together without any visible force to keep them in order, they may in a moment of worked-up passion do what would cause irreparable damage. For these reasons I think it is very necessary that the force in the Transvaal should be increased.[1]

A week later we find the following very important

[9] Lanyon to Colley.

[1] Lanyon to Colley.

indication of Government opinion at that moment in the Transvaal:

December 4. Hudson returned on Thursday from Potchefstroom, where he had an interview with Paul Kruger and some others of the malcontents. The whole affair is one of disinclination to pay taxes, or to be subordinate to any form of government. The committee have a hazy idea that they are the arbiters of the Transvaal, and that so long as the Government keeps quiet and does not worry them for taxes, so long will they let matters slide, leaving John Bull to pay the piper and keep the natives in order. But they become insulted if asked to contribute anything towards supporting the State. At the same time they readily avail themselves of every Government institution when it suits their purpose to do so. In fact it is only when it comes to *l.s.d.* that they cry out. . . .

The whole of the present agitation may be summed up in one word—Taxes; and till the people see that they must be paid, there will be trouble.[2]

In this letter of December 4 occur also some strange statements about the Boers. 'The young men seem to think that going on the shoot with soldiers is like going out buck-shooting.' And again:

The most absurd reports have been spread amongst them regarding the soldiers, who (they say) will go over to their side when they offer them each a farm for doing so. There is of course a chance of a row when a lot of excited men get together, and they may try conclusions, so it is well to be prepared. But I shall be very much surprised if they do anything openly. . . . They cannot do much, for their commissariat will be limited, as the greater part will have to come on horseback on account of the short notice.[3]

These extracts, written on the very eve of the general rising, need no comment. As the sands in

[2] Lanyon to Colley. [3] Lanyon to Colley.

the hourglass of peace are running shorter, we find no change on the part of the Administrator. If anything, his optimism increases. On December 11 he writes:

> At the present time the game is one of brag on both sides, and the Boers are trying to intimidate by getting together a lot of men about two-thirds of whom are pressed and brought together against their will. The most shameful coercion is being employed on every side. . . . I don't think we shall have to do much more than show that we are ready, and sit quiet and allow matters to settle themselves. . . . They (the Boers) are incapable of any united action, and they are mortal cowards, so anything they may do will be but a spark in the pan.[4]

Another week went by, and then the storm broke. On December 18 the Administrator wrote from Pretoria:

> Yesterday evening I received an express from Heidelberg to say that the Boers had gone there, hoisted their flag, and proclaimed the Republic. . . . At present it is almost impossible to arrive at any estimate of their numbers, as they are put down in an absurdly exaggerated manner, but I should think that 4,000 is about the total force which they have in the field, and a number of them are pressed men and won't fight. . . . I cannot conceive what can have so suddenly caused the Boers to act as they have, for it is certainly the result of an impulse, and could not have been premeditated. . . . I do not feel anxious, for I know that these people cannot be united, nor can they stay in the field. I presume that you will move up as soon as you hear the news.[5]

A couple of days later came news that at last seemed to bring home to the Government circle in Pretoria a faint conception of the real state of affairs. The Administrator wrote on December 21:

[4] Lanyon to Colley. [5] Lanyon to Colley.

This morning we received very bad news of the 94th. They had been ordered to concentrate on here, but through the want of transport they were unable to leave till the 3rd instant. . . . Owing to the wet weather they got on very slowly, and so Colonel Bellairs sent a second time to warn him (the Colonel of the 94th) to be careful in guarding against a surprise. This letter he acknowledged, but unfortunately he did not take action thereon, for he was attacked by the Boers under Piet Joubert, when his men were scattered over half a mile. . . . Every officer was at once shot down, and also all the sergeants, so that the men had no one to lead them. Had they charged, I believe they would have driven the Boers back. One hundred and twenty were killed and wounded, and the rest taken prisoners. I fear our men shot infamously, for the Boers were only 200 yards away, and yet they only killed one and wounded three, I believe. . . .

I must confess the situation is a most puzzling one, both to me and to every one else who should know the Boer character, for I know that, even up to the day when they suddenly left their camp and went to Heidelberg, the two leaders, Kruger and Pretorius, were most anxious to come to a settlement. But it seems as if the young men, headed by Piet Joubert, suddenly forced their hands by taking overt action. Even now it seems as if they cannot trust the greater number of their followers, for the bands which are attacking places are small, but are composed of their best men. If they were in bigger numbers they would not stand so well, and a bolt would be more likely. The 'Natal Witness' had something to do with it, for it pointed out that the military force was weak, and that England had her hands full in Ireland and Afghanistan, and this was greedily devoured by the Boers in camp, I am told. I do not think you would have to contend against nearly so many as Bellairs anticipates, for very many of those in camp have been forced there, and will not fight.

When this letter was written, communication with Natal had been interrupted. The headquarters of the 94th Regiment had been annihilated at Bronker-

spruit; Potchefstroom was besieged; every English garrison in the Transvaal was cooped within its fort or improvised defences; and the whole administration, the executive, the civil and social life of the Government and English party, had collapsed throughout the entire country.

Before going back to Natal, it will be well to specify the precise position of the troops at that moment. The King's Dragoon Guards had gone to India; the 58th Regiment had been partly withdrawn to Natal; the remaining two infantry battalions were in process of concentration at Pretoria; the Artillery (four guns) had reached the last-named place; Fort Albert, Leydenberg (with the exception of a small detachment), Middelberg, and Heidelberg had been evacuated; the remote post at Marabastadt still held troops.

We have already seen in the letters of the Administrator allusion to the opening moves of the Boers during the middle of December, but these require more detailed reference before the main struggle is reached. In the middle of November had occurred at Potchefstroom the first spark of open revolt. By a strange coincidence, the name of the man who set the long-smouldering mass of material aflame was Bezhuidenout, a grandson of that other Bezhuidenout whose resistance more than fifty years earlier in the old colony had produced the abortive rising of the Dutch, and led to the first 'trek' of the Boers into the Northern wilds. On the present occasion Bezhuidenout refused to pay a heavy bill of costs which the Government had formulated against him on account of a claim for taxes, admittedly made in error. The demand was persisted in, was again refused; then

followed the seizure of a waggon to cover the alleged debt, and the attempted sale of the distrained vehicle. Nothing more was wanting to bring things to a crisis. When the waggon was put up for auction, the sheriff-auctioneer was kicked from his vantage-point by a mob of Boers, oxen were yoked in, and it was carried off in triumph.

Then a small military force was ordered from Pretoria to assist the civil power at Potchefstroom in the execution of its office. How little the Government at Pretoria gauged the necessities of the occasion may be gleaned from the wording of the letter in which Sir O. Lanyon conveyed to the military commander at Pretoria his demand for assistance. 'In the event of the ringleaders being convicted,' so ran the letter, 'it appears to me desirable that the men should be removed to Pretoria, there to undergo their term of imprisonment; and in that case, should the landdrost request it, I shall be glad if an escort can be told off to assist in conveying the prisoners to Pretoria.' Now the entire military force sent to Potchefstroom amounted to 140 infantry and two field guns. Between Potchefstroom and Pretoria lived the most determined Dutch Boers in the Transvaal, and yet it was supposed that the little force detailed to occupy Potchefstroom, seize perhaps a dozen or more ringleaders, and hold all this wild district in check, would also be able to give an escort to convey to Pretoria—more than 100 miles distant—the prisoners whom the law might select to undergo exemplary punishment at that place. In the then temper of the whole Dutch people, not twice the total British force in the Transvaal would have sufficed to escort these people to the gaol at Pretoria.

Then followed, on December 17, the proclamation

of the Republic, and close upon it the attack at Bronkerspruit already related. We have seen the absolute ease with which on that occasion a body of Boer rifle horsemen had put *hors de combat* in twenty minutes some 250 infantry. In the astonishment with which that disastrous affair was first received, assertions of treachery were put forward, to account in some degree for a result so much at variance with the ideas of men still ignorant of the surprises which the perfected use of the rifle had in store. The trained mind of the High Commissioner realised at once the importance of avoiding the useless bitterness of such accusations, and amid the clamour of the crowd he would not countenance pleas of which a smaller man might readily have availed himself. He had at the first mention of the Transvaal trouble clearly indicated the very danger that had happened. Writing to the Colonial Secretary on the morning following the receipt of the news that the Boers had occupied Heidelberg and proclaimed the Republic, he said:

> There are two detachments that I am a little uneasy about. *One* marching from Leydenberg to reinforce the Pretoria garrison, and which ought to arrive about to-day, if not attacked *en route*; the other marching from Wakkerstroom similarly to reinforce Pretoria. This I know to be still on this side of Standerton, and I have ordered it to halt at Standerton and reinforce that post, which is naturally a strong one. If these two detachments reach their destinations unmolested, I shall feel, as regards military arrangements, 'all snug' until it suits us to move out against the Boers.[6]

How accurately this sentence gauged the military situation another few hours sufficed to tell. At the

[6] December 20, 1880, to Lord Kimberley.

moment Colley was writing these words, the detachment *en route* from Leydenberg to Pretoria was attacked and overwhelmed at Bronkerspruit, thirty miles from its destination. The other detachment mentioned succeeded in reaching Standerton without being attacked. But the point I would desire to emphasise is not the sagacity of the forecast, but rather the humanity, and the sense of justice, which characterised his judgment after the event he feared had occurred. Writing to the Colonial Secretary on the same day on which the news of Bronkerspruit reached him, Colley used these words:

> I am issuing a general order to try and check the violent revengeful feeling which, unfortunately, is almost sure to spring up in such a war. I know 'war cannot be made with rosewater,' and I am not much troubled with sentiment when the safety of the troops is at stake, but I hate this 'atrocity manufacturing' and its effects on the men, tending to make them either cowards or butchers.[7]

A noble sentence, with which this chapter may fitly conclude.[8]

[7] December 26, 1880, to Lord Kimberley.
[8] The general order to which it refers will be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ACTIONS AT LANG'S NEK AND THE INGOGO

Preparations for war—A scratch force—The Transvaal garrisons—The attack on Lang's Nek—Letter to Sir E. Wood—The Ingogo Heights.

ALL was now preparation for the coming struggle. Every day that passed, as the end of the year drew on, brought, either in its news or absence of news from the Transvaal, convincing proof that the whole fabric of British rule in that region had crumbled hopelessly to pieces at the first vibration of the Boer revolt. The garrisons were locked up as if by magic; communication was everywhere interrupted. The so-called friendly element in the country was now as silent as before it had been obtrusively demonstrative. On December 26, Colley wrote:

I am afraid my news by this mail is bad—how bad I cannot tell till I can judge better than I yet can of the full effect of the 94th disaster, and of the amount of active sympathy and assistance which the Transvaal Boers will receive from elsewhere. The wildest rumours are of course afloat, and it is difficult to find any one who can give an opinion worth having on the situation. Three weeks ago a loyal Boer from Utrecht came to see me, and the earnestness of his convictions that there was real danger abroad made such an impression on me that I asked Sir T. Shepstone to meet him and talk it over with me; but, after hearing what he had to say, Sir T. only laughed, and his perfect conviction that nothing but tall talk was meant, and that they had

practised on the timidity of the well-meaning old Boer, went far to prevent my attaching importance to his warnings. Now, Sir Theophilus takes the extreme danger view, and warns me seriously that this is not a struggle with the Transvaal Boers, but with the Dutch population of South Africa, who, he says, have never ceased to hate the English people and the English rule, and see in the Basuto War, which has drawn away most of the fighting strength of the English colonists, their opportunity to get rid of both. These views are not uncommon here, and the best of our volunteer officers told me yesterday he would very much have liked to accompany me to the Transvaal, but he did not think it was right in this contingency for any one of them to leave Natal, where their services might at any moment be required to resist a Boer invasion. . . . I cannot say I am much influenced by any of these views, though I think I was led to take too sanguine a view of the Boer difficulty; but between Basutos, Boers, Pondos, and our own natives it is not easy to steer truly always. I see no reason to regret, but on the contrary every reason to congratulate myself, that I drew in so many of the Transvaal detachments and concentrated the regiments; but it might have been better if I had kept the 58th concentrated at Ladysmith or Newcastle, according to my original intention, instead of moving some of them down country, as I was led to do by the East Griqualand outbreak and the Pondo alarms. . . . The old Boer burgher organisation seems to have more vitality than we were aware of, and to have been most successfully applied on this occasion. The men had apparently all been regularly summoned as in the old commando days, and many of them told my informant that they had no wish to be there, but were 'commandirt,' and what could they do? What no one, however, seems to be able in the least to explain is how so large an assemblage, drawn from every corner of the Transvaal, and from places which are nearly a month's waggon journey distant, were got together at such short notice. . . . I am still inclined to believe that the actual resolute fighting element is small, composed of an inconsiderable faction, and of the young bloods of the

country. I am afraid, however, the party will have been strengthened by the success gained over the 94th.[1]

The next letter is addressed to Mr. Brand, the President of the Orange Free State. It is dated December 30.

I have written and telegraphed officially in reply to yours, but I wish also to write privately to tell you how deeply distressed I am at what has occurred in the Transvaal, and how grateful I shall be to you for any advice or assistance you can afford me in endeavouring to bring about a settlement. . . .

The sudden outbreak and attack on our troops has been a heavy blow to me, for our troops had strict orders to avoid bringing on a collision, and to act only on the defensive, and I had still hoped that a collision could have been avoided until I had had the opportunity of personally endeavouring to effect a settlement. Now such a settlement is made ten times more difficult. . . . How hopeless the contest the Boers are now entering on is, you must be well aware. There are now, I believe, two cavalry regiments, two infantry regiments, and two batteries of artillery on their way to reinforce me, and twice that number more would reach here within a month if only I telegraph home the wish. What I most fear, and what I am striving most to check, is this extraordinary fever spreading beyond the Transvaal.

From these two letters and a third, written to his sister on New Year's Day, 1881, we shall be able to form an idea of the mental attitude of Sir George Colley at the moment he was about to begin this campaign against the Boers.

This is a sad and anxious New Year for us all here, as you may imagine. The last of the troops I have available, including some drafts only three days arrived from England, marched this morning, and I start in a few days to take

[1] Natal, December 26, 1880, to Lord Kimberley.

command and try and bring the Boers to battle, and relieve our garrisons at Potchefstroom and Pretoria. The disaster to the 94th has not only been a painful loss to us of many good officers and men, but has changed the whole aspect of affairs—a sort of Isandhlwana on a smaller scale. Had the 94th beaten off their assailants, as I still think they should have done if proper precautions had been taken on the march, the garrison of Pretoria would have been so far reinforced, and the Boers discouraged, that I doubt if Colonel Bellairs would have allowed himself to be invested at all, but think he would probably have taken the field at once, and very likely dispersed the Boers. Now I feel considerable doubts whether the force I am taking up is sufficient, and it is possible I may have to wait further for the reinforcements coming from India and England. As usual, there is a general panic spreading over the country, and an idea abroad that this is a long-nursed plot of the whole Dutch population of South Africa, who intend to rise against the English Government and population and drive them into the sea. You could hardly imagine the extent of the wild rumours and panic about. I am fortunately rather stolid by nature, and I don't think my face or words tell much that I don't mean them to. My impassiveness has, I think, a good quieting effect, and I play lawn tennis and hold receptions and visit schools and hospitals just as usual, and Edith seconds me splendidly, and rows or laughs at the people who come to her with long faces or absurd stories. . . . It is a peculiarly unpleasant kind of war to be engaged in also, and there is a bitter feeling of hatred and revenge springing up, which I have tried to check by a general order. I have had various offers of assistance in the way of raising volunteer forces, here and in the old colony; but though I shall want every man I can get, I am so impressed with the desirability of restricting the war, and not letting it become a race struggle between the Dutch and English throughout the colony, that I have refused every offer which could in any way tend to extend the area of the struggle, or array the civil population of the country against one another. I know the responsibility I am incurring by refusing such assistance,

and the weight of blame that will be thrown upon me if I fail in consequence, but I shall stick to what I think is right and wise.

It is curious how completely deceived all those who were supposed to be most conversant with Dutch ideas and character have been. Two months ago, when the troops in the Transvaal were being reduced, Sir O. Lanyon, the Administrator, wrote a long mem. to the effect that he felt no anxiety whatever regarding the Boers, who had never been so quiet and settled, but that he thought it undesirable to reduce the troops, as they might be required against the Basutos. . . . I shall be curious to see what the home opinion on the matter is. I suppose I shall be blamed for having reduced the force, and that I must accept, although it was an error shared with me by many persons who had far better opportunities of judging. . . .

One or two things are very noticeable in these extracts. In no vain or foolhardy spirit is he about to move against the Transvaal Boers, but as one who has carefully weighed every chance, thought out every contingency, and made his decision accordingly. He hates the duty which events have cast upon him. His protest against the atrocity cry in his letter to the Colonial Secretary, given at the close of the last chapter, and the letter to his sister, tell plainly how his thoughts were tending. The veil that had hidden the Transvaal from him was now lifted, at least in part, and he realised, with the bitterness of knowledge known too late, that he had been listening to false prophets, and following false guides as to the state of feeling in the Transvaal.

What but a belief in the right and justice of their cause could have induced the Boers to enter upon this 'hopeless contest'? At that moment the terrible accuracy of Boer rifle fire could only have been sus-

pected by Colley in a limited degree, and the pluck and determination he was soon to see proved on the battlefield must have been wholly unknown to him. Thus the action of the Boers in electing to appeal to the ordeal of arms, where ninety-nine out of one hundred chances must ultimately be against them, could not fail to arouse, in such a nature as his, a feeling of respect for the enemy he was about to fight. Nor is this inconsistent with the fact that later on, when committed to the struggle, and having learnt the power in war of these straight-shooting farmers, we shall find him opposed to any arrangement with them until the honour of his country's arms had been vindicated.

In the letter to President Brand, the allusion to the hope he had cherished that 'a collision might have been avoided until I had the opportunity of personally endeavouring to effect a settlement' had a more definite meaning than might at first appear. During the months following his return from the Transvaal in August, Colley had given much thought to the question of restoring to the Boers some form of representative government. 'As free a constitution as might be consistent with continued connection with the English crown' was his expression. My authority for this statement is the following letter:

Hotel Cecil: July 1, 1897.

DEAR LORD WOLSELEY,—As asked by you, I now write the substance of what I told you last evening.

Sir George Pomeroy-Colley, shortly before the Bronkerspruit affair, asked me to form one of a committee of three to go to the Transvaal, as he wanted to give to the Transvaal 'as free a constitution as might be consistent with continued connection with the English crown.' I agreed. Montagu,

afterwards in charge at Standerton, was to be another of the three. The third was not named. On receipt of the news of Bronkerspruit, Sir George told me that there was an end to his proposal, as he must go up to punish the Boers, who have fired on the troops.

Yours faithfully,
HENRY ESCOMBE.[2]

Such peaceful settlement was not to be. It has been said that revolutions cannot be made with rose-water, and neither, would it seem, can they be saved with ink.

Colley left Maritzburg for the front on January 10. The troops, such as they were, had preceded him on the road to Newcastle. The South African summer was at its worst; the roads were quagmires; the rivers were in flood; progress by men on horseback or on foot was slow; progress on wheels was slower still. Natal is a land of contradictions. Its summer is wet; its winter is dry. When the dry weather has hardened the clay tracks which are called roads, there is no forage for transport animals. When the wet and warm weather has covered the hillsides with grass the tracks have become quivering sloughs, the brooks are deep and rushing rivers. The road from Maritzburg to the Transvaal border is carried over a succession of plateaux, separated from each other by rivers, which, descending from the mountain range of the Drakensberg, have worn out for themselves deep valleys in their course to the sea. When the highest plateau is gained, at a point about 200 miles from Maritzburg, the Transvaal has been reached. In shape the northern part of Natal somewhat resembles

[2] For many years holding office in Natal, and recently the Premier of the Colony.

Facsimile of sketch of Action at Lang's Nek on Jan.ry 28th 1881. by Major General Sir George Colley K.c.
Sent by him to Sir Garnet Wolseley G.C.B. &c. Q.M.G.

Scale about 2 inches to the mile.

a. a. a. Line of advance of Right.
b. b. b. position occupied Evening before & carefully kept from observation.
c. c. ground on which Right & carefully formed from 1700 to 2200 yards distant from crest of the position occupied by Boers
d. ground skirmished over occupied by Boers
e. highest point of Table hills. 1 Sq of position
f. main & strongest position occupied by 1st Right, Mounted Brigade & Artillery during night on 28th
g. 2 Coys Rifles & 1 Mounted Police - Coys right flank
h. 10 Rifles on right of guns.
K.K. advance of 58th
K.L. withdrawal advance of Mounted Right
O. Actual point of charge when Brandon Capt Wyse and his men were killed.
P.P.P. ground occupied by Boers after defeat of Brandon.
X point where Deane Park Shaw and largest number of men were killed, when charging for E
yy slope held for some time by 58th companies 58th & Gen withdrawal of 60th
z.z. Rifles retreated to after withdrawal of 58th
1.2.3.4. ground occupied by Boers on Left.

a leg of mutton, if that familiar household joint had a flat instead of a rounded surface. The end of the leg-bone might represent the northern extremity of the colony, narrowing to a point, the mountains of the Drakensberg on the left, the Buffalo River on the right. Where it narrows so much as to leave but a mile or two between the mountain and the river, is the point at which Natal ends and the Transvaal begins. Five or six miles on the Natal side of this boundary, the last of the ground-waves already mentioned is reached, and the saddle, or lowest part of the ridge across which the road runs into the Transvaal, bears the name of Lang's Nek.

The descent from Lang's Nek, on the Natal side, is steep. The ridges on either side of the waggon road curve forward, somewhat enveloping the road to Newcastle, until on the west they merge into the steeper slopes of the Majuba Mountain; while to the east, the curve rests on the Buffalo River in rugged and lofty altitudes. Thus from the Majuba Mountain to the Buffalo, a position of great natural strength intersected the road by which access to the Transvaal could be gained from Newcastle. This position within Natal the Boers had already occupied before Colley's little force had reached Newcastle.

A little force truly it was, and not even compact or homogeneous in its smallness—twelve companies of infantry, taken from four different battalions; 120 mounted troops, half of whom were infantry partly trained to ride; six guns, also composite, and 120 sailors: in all a column from which about 1,200 fighting men could be evolved when the day of action came. Why then, it may be asked, was an advance made with this small force, when by waiting three or

four weeks the same road might be taken with a strong and efficient body of fighting men which would then have arrived in Natal from India and England?[3]

We shall let Colley tell his own story. He writes to Sir G. Wolseley from Newcastle on Jan. 17, 1881:

> Here I am, completing the concentration, &c., of the small column with which I propose to enter the Transvaal, and try the Boers' mettle, and I would much like to know whether you at home are blaming my slowness in not moving forward earlier and with a smaller force, or think me rash in attempting to move with so small a one, and without waiting for the reinforcements now coming out. My determination was taken, however, as soon as I felt myself able to form any opinion of the extent of the revolt, and of the effect of that most unfortunate disaster to the 94th.

Then he describes his force, how he had got it together—some portion of it coming from the extreme south of the colony—how he had manned and equipped four guns that were in store, in addition to the two field guns at Maritzburg, how he had made up a mounted force of 120 men from some details of dismounted dragoons, Army Service Corps men, and volunteers from two infantry battalions, how again he had got a naval detachment of another 120 men with a couple of Gatling guns from the 'Commodore,' making for his fighting column 'as queer a mixture as was ever brought together, I think.'

Having enumerated the details of his force, he gives the picture of the Transvaal garrisons as they

[3] Sir George's action was probably to some extent influenced by misgivings as to the treatment which might possibly be extended to the more remote garrisons if they should fall into the hands of the enemy (cf. a memorandum by the Administrator, and Col. Bellairs's district orders referring to Boer methods of fighting, and to the use of flags of truce for purposes of obtaining better positions, as well as instances of firing on white flags. *S. Afr. Blue Book*, 1881, c. 2866, pp. 109-111.)

were at the moment situated. The story was the same everywhere, except at Potchefstroom: at Pretoria, Standerton, Wakkerstroom, Leydenberg, Rustenberg, Marabastadt, garrisons closely invested, unable to move out from their forts or block-houses, no communication possible between them, but all have food and ammunition sufficient for two to three months. At Potchefstroom, matters were by no means so satisfactory. There the garrison of 120 infantry and artillery, and a small detachment of mounted men, were ill supplied with food; not more than a month could be counted upon for them. They had, it will be remembered, been hastily moved from Pretoria to aid the civil power a couple of months earlier. It was known that two officers and about twenty men had already been killed or taken prisoners out of the small isolated force, and it was also known that a strong, active, and very energetic body of Boers were closely investing the place. Here was the essentially weak spot in the whole Transvaal situation. Colley's letter continues:

Our weak point, as you will see, is Potchefstroom. From all I can gather it might hold out till the middle of February, but not much later, while no important reinforcements can now reach me here till after that date, and it would take another twenty days to reach Potchefstroom. Unless I can in some way relieve the pressure on Potchefstroom before the middle of next month, I am afraid that garrison and its guns must fall into the Boers' hands. This it is which has determined me to move on without awaiting further reinforcements.

I imagine I shall certainly be attacked when crossing the border, and probably have a stiff fight at the Lang's Nek, the edge of the Berg, about three miles this side of Walker's at Coldstream. If I have bad luck, I must only hold my own and await the reinforcements; if fair luck, push through to

Standerton, and hold on there till the reinforcements arrive; if good luck, push on to Standerton, pick up three more companies there, march on Heidelberg, and try to bring them to a decisive battle there. I hear from all sides they are very anxious to try and capture our guns, and I dare say we shall have to look sharp after them. My little force, I am glad to say, is very cheery and confident, but people generally are anxious, and shake their heads gloomily at my venturing on without any regular cavalry.

There the letter broke off. When it was taken up, ten days later, the battle of Lang's Nek had been fought, and another development of the political and military situation had begun. But before entering upon that new chapter in the history of South Africa, a word is required upon the reasons given above for this movement into the Transvaal before the arrival of the reinforcements. Potchefstroom was the determining factor in the question of this first advance. That fact is emphasised over and over again in the correspondence of the time. An officer writing from Newcastle on January 24, thus describes the feeling uppermost in men's minds there:

I lunched yesterday at mess, sitting by Sir George, and took an affectionate parting of them all; though, good fellows as they all are, I could scarcely keep the tears from my eyes at being obliged to leave them at such a moment. God only knows how affairs may turn. If they get over this first bit of about twenty miles from this, they would be fairly right, and had they only 500 cavalry I would back them. Consummate general as I believe Colley to be—the incarnation of intelligence I find him—but 'tis heavy odds, and with such shots as the Boers are, still heavier. If Colley is killed it will be a national loss.

The arrangements for the march are perfect, but the cavalry arm is weak—a sprinkling of K.D.G.'s, and the rest mounted infantry—a poor lot, for Tommy Atkins cannot shoot well on foot, and on horseback it takes all he knows to

keep his seat. Deane said to me, after marching out the other day: 'What a mouthful it looked!' Of course Sir George knows that, and said to me when sitting on my bed: 'If Potchefstroom could hold out, one might sit and smoke here with advantage, but they cannot last beyond the middle of February.'

Few letters in the correspondence of the time contain more plain truth than this unpretentious document. We see it all: the mouthful of troops; the make-believe mounted men, the untrained soldiers who couldn't hit a haystack, even if they knew one by sight; the brave, devoted staff; the General in whom all believed—who knew well all the weak points, but was bound to attempt the forlorn hope. For there, over the border, is Potchefstroom with its sore-pressed garrison. It is not what they will say in England if the Union Jack has to be pulled down, and the white flag of surrender hauled up—though that will be hard enough; it is what he will say to himself, and what they, the beleaguered in Potchefstroom, will say of him: 'You left us here to undergo the ignominy of surrender when you had men enough to make at least the attempt to save us. You stood, as it were, on the bank while we were drowning, and moved no hand nor foot to save us. You, with regular troops under you, and only rough farmer foreigners against you.'

Keeping before us this view of the question, and remembering that it was then the only view of it, we will go on with Colley's letter to Sir Garnet Wolseley, at the point where he resumed it ten days later, and two days after the repulse at Lang's Nek.

Camp near Lang's Nek: January 30.

I began this letter some time ago, but was too busy then to finish it, and since then I have made my attack and failed,

and I suppose shall be gibbeted accordingly. I don't mind that, but I do care for the good men and personal friends I have lost, and for the effect on the Transvaal garrisons of the consequent delay.

I completed my concentration at Newcastle on the 20th, but bad weather, incomplete equipment, and the delay of the 'Tamar' combined to make me put off my move till the 24th, and I then marched slowly, as my convoy was long and the transport newly put together. I thought it very likely I should be attacked on the road. . . . But the Boers left me unmolested. On the 26th I reached my present position, and established a strong partly entrenched camp on a high ridge about a mile to the right of the road (which here skirts along the spurs of the Drakensberg). I intended to have moved out to attack on the 27th, but rain and thick mist during the early part of that day kept me quiet.

On the 28th I moved out with about 870 infantry, 180 mounted men, six guns, and three rocket tubes, leaving 200 men and two Gatlings to defend the camp and convoy. The annexed rough eye sketch will, I think, give you a fair idea of the fight. I moved forward across open grassy ridges, under cover of my guns, till I got to the foot of, and about 2,000 yards from, the Boer position, where I formed up my force on a favourable ridge.

The Boer right, resting on a great precipitous mountain, intersected with deep kloofs, was practically unassailable, and the centre, fired down upon from both flanks, equally so (the eastern end of the table hill in my sketch should be thrown a little more forward, enveloping the road more); and it was quite clear that the eastern and highest end of the table hill, forming practically the left end of this position, was the key of it. Beyond this a detached conical hill (marked D), connected with the main hill by a low neck with easy slopes, was occupied by a Boer picquet of probably 200 men. Had I had men enough, I should have begun by taking this, but the movement would necessarily have been an extended one, and have taken time, as the hill branches into a number of spreading spurs, terminating in precipitous ravines. I should have had to withdraw all troops to my right for the purpose,

and meanwhile the enemy, whom the central position I had taken up left in doubt as to the point I intended to attack, and who consequently remained extended over several miles of broken ground, would have had time to collect his strength on that side. Accordingly I decided to attack the spur, K, directly, covering the infantry attack with the mounted men on their flank, and with artillery fire. This spur is very steep, but completely dead ground—that is to say, for the most part entirely covered, except from the ridge on its right rear, which I hoped to clear with the mounted men; and from the top, near X, is a short rush of comparatively level ground to the crest of the hill.

I formed up my guns at C C; pushed a company of rifles, eighty naval brigade, and some rockets into a piece of enclosed ground at F, where they had cover behind a wall, and commenced shelling different parts of the position until we had the ranges pretty accurately. Then, keeping three companies 60th and 70 mounted police in reserve with the guns, I directed the five companies 58th and Brownlow's mounted squadron to attack.

The lines C K and C L show the proposed lines of advance for the infantry and cavalry respectively. The neck at L is low, and it is good going for cavalry to that point, and thence either up to the right to the hill D, or to P on the left; and my intention was that as the infantry rose the spur at K, the cavalry should crest the ridge at L, and either clear the hill D, or move up on the flank of the infantry, according to circumstances. During the first part of the march, and until they reached K and L respectively, they would be completely under cover.

Brownlow, however, bore more to the right than I had intended, and came under fire, and, drawing up his men facing the steep part of the hill, D, charged right up it to O before the infantry had even begun the ascent of K. Of course, in action, the man on the spot must often decide the ground and the moment for a charge, and Brownlow's was most gallantly made. Brownlow and a part of his leading troop, consisting principally of K.D.G.'s, actually crested the ridge, his sergeant-major and a corporal being shot in doing

so, and Brownlow's horse and that of his subaltern shot dead. Brownlow himself shot the Boer leader with his revolver; the Boers had received the order to retire, and were running to their horses, and the hill was actually won, when the supporting troop, seeing, as they thought, all their leaders down, turned and galloped down the hill—I believe, before a man was shot; and the Boers, seeing them turn, immediately ran forward to the ridge again and slated them. Brownlow, who was on foot, got off by a miracle; the whole lot went headlong down the hill, and although their losses were not very heavy (four killed and thirteen wounded, almost all out of the leading troop) the mounted men were practically out of action for the rest of the day.

Had there been time I would have stopped the infantry attack the moment I saw the result of Brownlow's charge, for their flank was now exposed before there was any possibility of making arrangements to cover it; but the infantry were already rising the hill at K, and coming into action, and I was afraid of the effect of counter orders at such a moment. All that I could do was to concentrate as much artillery fire as possible to cover them. The men whom Brownlow had partly routed had now galloped down, some to P, and some to P^4, whence they fired into the right flank and rear of the 58th as they streamed up the hill, while the Boers actually stationed on the hill collected at P^2, P^3, whence they looked down upon our men scrambling up. The men had pushed too eagerly up a slope requiring almost to be climbed on hands and knees (but on which, had Brownlow's charge succeeded, they would have been completely covered from fire, and could have rested quietly), and when they got near X, the crest of the spur, were in a confused mass, and quite beat and breathless. Deane made a gallant and desperate attempt to charge, and fell riddled with bullets as he got on the brow, where his body was found ten yards in advance of any other man's, and Poole, Elwes (whom I had allowed to accompany him), and Inman, his orderly officer, were all shot beside him. A number of men gallantly struggled up after him, but all the mounted officers were down, the men themselves were utterly beat with the rapid climb, and the rear, suffering

heavily from the fire from P and P¹, began to fall back, so that there was nothing left for it but to retire.

Two companies, directed by Essex (whose horse was shot, but who behaved splendidly throughout), took position behind a ledge at Q Q to check the Boers, and I sent out some of the 60th to cover the retreat from the ridge V V, and so practically ended the fight.

The naval brigade, who pitched their rockets admirably over the Nek, were fired into pretty heavily from the left, but were well covered by a wall, and only lost two men killed and one wounded. The 58th, who really fought admirably, and lost 160 out of 480 men, re-formed behind the rifles, and came back in perfect order.

I confess I was greatly disappointed at the effect of the artillery fire, which even when the Boers came out of their cover, and crowded the ridge pretty thickly, seemed absolutely nil, and to this, and to the failure of Brownlow's charge, I attribute the loss of the day. But in justice to Brownlow's second troop, it must be remembered they consisted only of mounted infantry very recently organised—it was a steep and bold charge, and some of their horses with little training could not be brought to face the fire, and they had seen, as they believed, nearly all their leaders down. Had I to attack the position again with the same number of men, I think I should attack it in exactly the same manner that I originally intended, and I would feel pretty confident of success.

Meanwhile, I am holding on in my fortified camp until I get some more troops up, when I shall probably go at it again, beginning this time with the hill D. The troops are as cheery and confident as possible, and only keen to go at it again. There is a talk of the Boers attacking *me* here, but I fear I cannot expect such luck as to have my Kambula after Zlobane as Evelyn Wood had. . . Good-bye now, and excuse such a long yarn. I had a difficult game to play, and dare say I should have got lots of kudos if I had succeeded, dispersed this revolt, and relieved the unfortunate Transvaal garrisons. As it is, I have failed, and I shall not whine about luck or injustice, or make long faces if I am superseded

or shelved. All that I wish is that I could have saved those good chaps who have served me so well—Deane, Poole, young Elwes, and others. No one could have been better served by men and officers than I have been, and I could not prevent the poor chaps cheering me wildly when I spoke a few words to them after we had returned to camp.

Ever truly yours,
G. POMEROY-COLLEY.

. . . . . .

I don't know what the Boer losses have been, but imagine not very heavy, as they were mostly well covered. I think my original estimate of their numbers—viz., about 2,000 here—was correct. They were very largely armed with Martinis, and I must say were no cowards, exposing themselves freely to artillery fire, and coming boldly down the hill to meet our men.

So ends this characteristic letter, the letter of a soldier of whom any army might be proud, even though he told the story of disaster. Later in the evening of that eventful day, Colley paraded his small force and addressed to them a few words in which, according to a correspondent's account, he exonerated the men from all blame for the repulse, and praised the 58th for the manner in which they had fought. They had lost many gallant soldiers in the day's fight, but they had not lost one atom of the prestige of England. He would now be compelled to await the arrival of reinforcements, but the day would come when that hill before which they had been baffled would be in their possession; and when that time came, he would see that the men who had fought for him to-day would again be beside him.

And then, later still, he sent a few lines to the home at Maritzburg; a few lines in which the heart

gets out through the folds of duty and professional honour, in which he has so carefully enwrapped it, and we see the weight of sorrow that is on him.

I am too tired and too sad to write much. Poor Deane dead—oh, his poor wife!—and Elwes and Poole all killed together, and the ambulances passing me with the wounded every minute; and I, of course, must accept the verdict of failure, as I have always been prepared to, though it seems a very small matter in comparison with the losses and gaps all around me.

The attack did not come off well from the first. The artillery fire seemed to produce *no* effect, even when the enemy were fully exposed; and Major Brownlow's charge, which I had counted upon to support infantry and free their flank, came off too soon, owing to some mistake, and, though splendidly led by himself and his sergeant-major, came to nothing.[4]

We might multiply, if space permitted, these instances of how a brave man takes defeat, cheering his men, and quietly prepared for the usual 'gibbeting' which a free press priding itself on being an expert in military criticism has always in stock for the encouragement of commanders. 'Don't fret about me,' he writes to his wife, two days after the battle. 'About myself I don't care, and I never believed I could have cared so little what people will say or think about me. I am satisfied I was right to advance and attack, and to attack as I did. All that I care for is for the good men gone, and for their poor wives or relatives.'[5] And in the same letter he wrote:

There is only one feeling in camp now—that had Brownlow's second troop supported him the day was ours. Poor Brownlow, who behaved *splendidly*, is quite broken-hearted,

[4] January 28, 1881, to his wife.
[5] Mount Prospect, January 30, 1881.

and when he came down the hill refused to speak to his men or go near them. I have been comforting him, however, and telling him we must make allowances for untrained men with untrained horses, and that it is really wonderful what he has done with them. I feel the loss of poor Deane more and more every day. His knowledge of regimental detail, combined with his charm of manner and chivalrous character, did more than anything else to make the tone of this force what it is; and the men all admired his death so: the men in hospital would lift themselves up to tell me they were close behind him when he fell; I believe he had four wounds in his head. Poole was shot through the throat, and poor Elwes had two bullets in the head, I believe, so that in all cases death must have been instantaneous.

One more passage written a few days later in connection with Lang's Nek may be given: 'As for my being over-confident, I have often said that you may class most men, soldiers especially, as those who see the difficulty of a thing and why it cannot be done—and those who see the way of overcoming difficulties and doing it; and I have certainly always aimed at belonging to the latter class.'[6]

And now there came a few days of quiet, perhaps more difficult to bear after defeat than continued action would have been. Sixty or eighty years ago, such a brief spell of sitting still after a repulse would have mattered little to the general in command. When Wolfe was beaten back from Montmorency, and Wellesley retreated from Talavera, all the details of the killed and of the wounded who fell into the enemy's hands slowly percolated into the home papers long after the occurrences had taken place; but now the electric wire had changed all that, and every breakfast table in the Empire was busy, not only with

[6] February 5, 1881, to his wife.

the news itself, but with a hundred amplifications, and a thousand comments upon it, before the last man killed had been buried. And the wire was busy, too, in other ways than conveying criticisms or condemnations. It was already telling of negotiations, of thoughts entering the Government brain at home, which should have entered it six months earlier.

The question whether to remain at Mount Prospect, or to withdraw the entire force to Newcastle and there await the arrival of reinforcements, no doubt presented itself, and must have been one of very equal balance. There is no disgrace in retreating from a field of action when the fortune of war has declared against us. Many of the best feats of generalship have been performed in extricating a beaten army from the scene of its disaster. A retreat to Newcastle on the next night following Lang's Nek would have saved the action of the Ingogo and the consequences which followed, and would possibly have afforded some tactical advantages in subsequent operations. On the other hand, the moral effect of withdrawing to Newcastle must undoubtedly have been very serious, both in South Africa and in England. It would have greatly elated the Boers, and probably drawn to their ranks many wavering well-wishers. So long as a British force remained in front of the position at Lang's Nek, the repulse of the 28th could not be regarded as final, but only as a check liable at any moment to be reversed. A retreat must also have adversely influenced the condition of the beleaguered garrisons in the Transvaal; and there was, as we have seen, a hope in Colley's mind that the Boers, in the flush of their success, might venture

upon attacking the camp, now in good state of defence.

Colley at all events decided to remain entrenched at Mount Prospect until his reinforcements had come up, and there are passages in his later letters which indicate the opinion that the Boers had been held in check, and the communications fairly maintained, by the course he adopted. Again, in considering this question we must remember that Lang's Nek had not revealed to him the full strength of the forces that opposed him. His letters for a week following that action show that he was yet far from realising the immense superiority of fire which the Dutch farmers possessed over our men, neither was he at all convinced that the whole body of the Boers were then prepared to fight this quarrel to the end. He still adhered to the opinion that a great number of his enemies had been pressed into the hostile ranks, that they were unwilling fighters, that whenever he succeeded in forcing the ridge above his camp there would ensue an inevitable reaction among the Dutch in the Transvaal.

The plan of campaign which Colley set himself to work out immediately after the repulse of his attack on Lang's Nek is set forth in a letter written to Sir Evelyn Wood on February 4. This letter throws light upon many things besides the military intentions of the writer.

Mount Prospect: February 4.

MY DEAR WOOD,—I was right glad to hear that you were coming out here, and think it very generous of you to be ready to serve under a junior and less experienced officer. However, you can afford to be generous with your reputation. You will have heard of my repulse at Capetown, and Wavell will show you my despatch. . . .

My future plans are as follows. I shall add the 15th Hussars, 2-60th, and 92nd to the field force under my personal command, giving me about 2,200 infantry, 450 cavalry, and eight guns and Gatlings. From the troops remaining in Natal—viz., 83rd, 97th, 6th Inniskillings, and two batteries of artillery—I propose to form a second column, under your command, to be assembled at Newcastle, and used either to co-operate by a flanking movement if the Boers mass such large forces here as to make that necessary, or to support and occupy and pacify Wakkerstroom, Utrecht, &c. If all goes well here, and the troops are not unduly delayed by the rains, I hope to be in a position to move forward about the 20th, about which time your troops will be beginning to assemble at Newcastle; and if we clear the Nek satisfactorily I shall probably leave you one regiment at Wakkerstroom, and push on with a lighter column to Pretoria, leaving you in command of all forces below the Vaal River, to relieve Leydenberg and settle the Swazi border and the Wakkerstroom and Utrecht districts, where you are so well known and popular. I would gladly give you the Pretoria column, but I must push on there myself to assume the government, and the force is hardly large enough for two generals when all the rest of the command is left without one; the more so as there will be three generals when we reach Pretoria, as Bellairs has been given rank of brigadier-general. You will also, I am sure, understand that I mean to take the Nek myself!

What I shall ask you to do, therefore, is as follows:

1st. Take command of all troops in Natal, exclusive of Newcastle, on arrival; see to the landing, equipping, &c., of the reinforcements arriving from England, to the arrangements for their transport and march up country, and to the collection at Newcastle of two months' supplies of all kinds —ordnance, commissariat, &c.—for 5,000 men, 1,500 horses, 1,500 mules, exclusive of the one month's supply which each column on advancing will take with it. I badly want an officer to overlook things for a time at Maritzburg. . . .

2nd. When the forces are all well advanced up country, and supply arrangements sufficiently forward, to proceed to

Newcastle, and there assemble and fit out your column, still retaining command of all Natal. . . .

[Here follow details as regards the forces to be assembled at Newcastle.]

3rd. When an advance takes place, and I cross the Vaal River [you are] to assume command of all forces in the Transvaal east of the Vaal River, including Newcastle in your command, but letting the rest of the troops in Natal revert to the commandant at Maritzburg. You will then settle the Wakkerstroom and Utrecht districts and Swazi border, relieve Leydenberg, and, should it be necessary, send or take a small force round by Marabastadt and Middelberg, while Bellairs from Pretoria will take Potchefstroom, Rustenberg, &c. . . .

I think it is possible, though not probable, that I may have trouble in my rear from the Free State direction, and that is another reason why I am glad to have you in Natal just now. The Free State Boers sympathise very warmly with those of the Transvaal, and have joined them in considerable numbers, and there are strong rumours of Pretorius meditating a descent on Natal, and on the reinforcements on their march through Van Reenan's Pass. If anything serious threatens, you will, of course, call up the 83rd and division of artillery from Richmond camp, and I will, if necessary, spare you an infantry regiment from my column, and with three infantry regiments, a strong cavalry regiment, and eight guns, I think you will be a match for any number of Free Staters. Should Natal be seriously threatened, I would, of course, call out the volunteers and local forces; but I trust such a course will not become necessary. I will not inflict more on you at present, but with a most hearty welcome remain

Ever yours truly,
G. POMEROY-COLLEY.

Four days after this letter was written came the fight at the Ingogo.

In the early days of February, a considerable number of the wounded, and all the surplus stock and

empty waggons, were sent back to Newcastle. A day or two later the road was interrupted by the appearance of a strong Boer patrol near the Ingogo River. The road between Mount Prospect and Newcastle was at this summer season in South Africa at its worst. Floods of tropical rain pour down upon the kloofs of the Drakensberg, which here skirts the track on its western side; the many streams and watercourses quickly rise to dangerous heights, and become in a couple of hours impassable for man or beast. But besides these flooded and dangerous watercourses, the road itself was only a succession of water washes, mud holes, and boulders of rock. Descending for four or five miles a spur of the Inquela Mountain, this water-soaked track reached the Ingogo River at a ford or drift which was about two feet in depth at low water. The river crossed, the road ascended again to a small plateau, and thence wound its rugged and tortuous way towards Newcastle. The high plateau south of the Ingogo bore the name of Schiens Hoogte, and was distant from the river about two miles, its centre nearly marking the midway point between Newcastle and Lang's Nek.

On February 7, the post, carried by mounted natives, was attacked on its way to Newcastle on this plateau, and was only saved from capture by a rapid flight of its bearers back to camp. The line of communications was interrupted. A convoy, too, was expected in from Newcastle, but, convoy or no convoy, interrupted communications mean much in war, unless it be some temporary separation between front and base, which a couple of days' work can restore. This incident brought the situation to an immediate

crisis. At 8 o'clock on the morning of February 8, Colley marched out of Mount Prospect with a small force—thirty-eight cavalry, four guns, and about 280 infantry. He would escort the mail upon which the attack had been made yesterday more than half way on its road to Newcastle, and then return with the convoy expected from that place. The Boers awed by the artillery, it was thought, would not venture to attack, and the whole of the little column might probably be back in camp early in the afternoon. The morning was brilliant with the midsummer sunlight; all were in good spirits; after ten days' inactive life in camp, the prospect of action was pleasant.

The Ingogo was reached without any sign of the enemy. Beyond the double drift which here crossed the river and its tributary stream, the track could be seen for more than a mile, leading up the ascent to the plateau. The keeper of the little roadside inn, near the drift, had not seen any Boers that morning, but on the previous day armed parties had been about, and waggons had been looted. Leaving a couple of mountain guns and a half-company of infantry to hold a spur commanding the river passage, Colley directed his main body to cross the Ingogo. The mounted troops led, then followed the infantry; two guns brought up the rear. In this order, after a short halt between the river and the plateau, the advance was continued south. The scouts and mounted men cresting the plateau soon came in sight of the enemy. The Boers, in a skirmish line with supports in rear, formed a wide semicircle, the left of which flanked the road across the plateau, while the right horn barred the road in front, where it descended into lower ground. Before this sudden

development of the enemy's force, the mounted men fell back, and the infantry companies, followed by the guns, pushed up the incline, until, gaining the ridge, they too came in sight of the Boers. As the successive companies gained the plateau, they were hurriedly posted around the crest line, the Boers opening fire before our men were in position. The summit of the plateau was a fairly level piece of ground, strewn here and there with boulders, but its sides to south and west, where the enemy was seen, were marked with larger outcrops of rock, and between these massive and disjointed boulders, the long grass of the lower valleys offered perfect cover for marksmen.

A movement significant of Boer tactics and intentions now took place in the lower ground. A thousand yards distant on the right a strong body of mounted men were standing close enough together to offer an easy target to artillery. Between this body, which numbered about 100, and our position the ground descended into a 'donga,' rising again to the opposite ridge on which the Boers stood. It was a chance for artillery not to be lost; the gun swung quickly round, unlimbered, and came into action. There was a momentary hesitation on the part of the Boers, and well there might be. Here was the arm whose prowess they had most reason to fear. Would they turn and gallop back to seek shelter behind the ridge on which they stood, or go forward and get within rifle distance of the nine-pounders? There was little time given to choose. The first shell burst high and beyond them, as at full gallop the band descended the hill, gained the lower donga, and, dismounting, began at once to push up the little valleys

leading to the plateau, where, from the cover of every rock and grass patch, they opened a rapid and most accurate fire on the guns and skirmishers now in action. This bold movement practically sealed the fortunes of the day; but it did more than that. It showed the mind of the Boer leaders, and the Boer farmers, in this business of war they had now entered upon. They no longer feared the mere presence of artillery. Get within rifle range, and their straight shooting would do the rest. This day at the Ingogo heights was the third occasion on which they had met our troops in the open. Bronkerspruit was a field of Boer choosing; there they had all the advantage which selection of position, knowledge of ground, and initiative in attack give. At Lang's Nek they were acting on the defensive, in ground they had previously selected and partly prepared; but here, at Ingogo, was a fight brought about on the spur of the moment by a movement of our force from Mount Prospect, upon which they could not have reckoned four hours earlier. It was only at Ingogo that their readiness to meet our troops on any ground was made manifest. But had that first shell burst a few feet lower, the fortunes of this little war might easily have been changed.

It was now half-past 12 o'clock. The plateau, more or less triangular in shape, and having a level surface of about four acres at top, was held by four companies of the 60th Rifles, two guns, and some thirty-eight mounted troops, numbering in all about 300 men; the infantry in extended order were dotted along the edges of the level ground, or slightly advanced downhill; one of the guns was in action towards the right, the other to the left in the direction

of the road to Newcastle; the artillery teams and mounted troops were disposed as much as possible in the centre of the level space, where the Boer bullets did not come so thickly. For in the lower ground, where the terraces descending from the plateau sloped down into the boulder-strewn dongas and long-grassed ravines that encircled the position, the Boer marksmen were now in force, and a ceaseless stream of bullets swept the edges of the plateau, and crossed the level ground a few feet above its surface. Terribly fatal was the fire to the men who served the guns, and to the teams and drivers who could not get shelter. The guns became the especial object of fire. Captain Greer, the artillery officer in command, was soon shot, and the casualties among his men grew so numerous that riflemen had to be temporarily used as gunners. Captain MacGregor, the senior staff officer and military secretary, fell early in the action. It was evident that in the rifle duel now going on our men could not do more than hold their own: they were unable to subdue the fire of their enemies. Shot for shot they might return, but while every Boer bullet came with unerring accuracy of direction and elevation, the fire on our side was much less effective. Many of the horses were shot early in the action, and some of the artillery teams lay dead in their harness in the order in which they had stood when alive.

For three hours the action continued on the lines upon which it had begun. The firing line of the Boers more and more enveloped the plateau; only on one side, that by which the column had moved when advancing from the drift to the position, was there no enemy; and at times a couple of Boer marksmen would

open fire even there, having crept along some depression to a spot from which the little plateau could be searched in some new direction. About 3 o'clock a few Boers pushed closer to the edge of the plateau near its eastern end, whence they were able to take in flank that part of the defending line which was engaged with the Boer centre and left. If the enemy was reinforced here, nothing could prevent his fire searching every portion of the position, and eventually clearing our troops from it.

This advance of the Boers necessitated the only movement made during the day on our part, after the first dispositions had been effected. A company of rifles was ordered to move towards the eastern angle, to prevent the Boers establishing themselves at that vital point. But the intervening space had to be crossed under the enemy's fire. In diminished strength, they reached the ground, a slight outcrop of rock on the bare edge of the ridge. For more than three hours these men lay in this position, shot at from two sides. They themselves shot steadily down the slope. Of the entire company, only some sixteen men were unwounded at the end of the day; but their heroic action achieved its object, and prevented the Boers from occupying this point of vantage. It would be difficult to picture a scene in which the conditions of modern fighting could be more fully exemplified than in the prolonged rifle duel at this point of the field of Ingogo. Many years ago, the author of that celebrated brochure, 'The Battle of Dorking,' wrote a sort of supplementary pamphlet, which he called 'The New Ordeal.' But little noticed at the time, it prefigured in a remarkable manner the actual scenes called forth in this fight at the foot

of the Drakensberg in Natal—scenes bound to be repeated wherever a contest is carried on between bodies of infantry of somewhat equal numbers—a long, dull, deadly duel, in which precision in shooting and aptitude in taking cover must tell over all other military aptitudes and trainings. To the casual observer of ground, the position on the ridge might seem to command the ground below it, and so, no doubt, in one sense it did, but the men firing uphill from behind the rocks below were far better shots than those who were firing downhill from behind the rocks above.

'The plateau,' wrote Colley a few days later, 'though in some respects very favourable for defence, had the disadvantage, on the south side, of a round slope, with rocks dotted about it, so that whatever position the troops occupied, the Boers by retreating a little down the hill could get nearly as good cover.'[7]

After the first couple of hours the Boer fire had slackened. Figures showing above the crest line still drew instant and accurate fire, but the earlier energy of the fight had abated. Notwithstanding the severity of our loss, the resolute front maintained by our troops prevented the enemy's design of clearing the position and capturing the guns. Despite their cover the Boers had suffered loss. About 4 o'clock they could be seen removing wounded from the field. Their total casualties were afterwards reported to amount to twenty, of whom ten were killed.[8] It is probable that, checked by this loss, and by the attitude of resistance so

[7] Mount Prospect, February 12, 1881, to the Duke.

[8] This was the Boer statement, but the British thought that the Boer losses were heavier.

steadily maintained on the ridge, the enemy ceased to press the attack.

When the action had developed, Colley sent two mounted men to Mount Prospect, directing three companies of the 58th to move out to the Ingogo. These reinforcements reached the ridge above the river in the evening, and their presence secured the passage of the double drift. As the sun dropped slowly towards the Drakensberg, clouds began to rise in the west, and thunder growled upon the mountains, presaging a night of storm and rain. Between 5 and 6 o'clock rain descended in torrents. To the wounded men the heavy drops gave some relief, for the afternoon had been intensely hot, and the fever of wounds rapidly produced thirst in its worst form. The South African day is long in the month of February, and it was past seven before the night had closed sufficiently to prevent the Boer marksmen from sending an occasional bullet along the plateau. When darkness quite set in, it became possible to count the losses and collect the wounded. The plateau, however, had still to be held, as the position and intentions of the enemy were uncertain. At last their continued inaction seemed to show they had abandoned the attack. The troops were then formed up preparatory to withdrawing to the camp at Mount Prospect. The distance was not more than eight miles, but the river must now have risen many feet; the rain was still descending, and every hour's delay meant a greater height of water at the double drift. In the last half-hour of daylight, a movement of Boers was observed in the direction of the drift. It seemed probable that they had gathered towards the river with the object of intercepting any attempt to

withdraw from the battlefield. But the reinforcements ordered to cross the Ingogo earlier in the afternoon discontinued their movement owing to darkness, and, recrossing the river, had concentrated on the hill commanding the double drift.

Then the guns had to be thought of. How were they to be brought away? All the artillery officers and most of the gun detachments were either killed or disabled; the loss in horses had been still more severe. When the surviving animals of all kinds were counted, it was found that the two guns and one waggon could still be horsed. It took a long while to get the little force together in a hollow square, the guns in the centre, the infantry in loose formation on the four sides, all the officers on foot; no lights were struck. The darkness was intense; orders were given in whispers; the ammunition was removed from the pouches of the wounded men; surplus rifles were bent and broken; even the few remaining rounds of gun ammunition were broken up and buried; and then, leaving the wounded covered with whatever blanket and waterproof-sheeting could be found, the little band marched off from the hard-held field of Ingogo. The route followed to gain the river was not the same as that by which the column had marched in the morning. A line across the hills was taken. At times direction was lost in the darkness, and halts were made till the proper track was recovered. 'On approaching the double drift,' wrote Colley in his despatch—

> The column halted, and a patrol was sent out to ascertain that the drift was clear, and the column then filed across. A heavy thunderstorm had now come on; the darkness was intense, and the river, swollen by the rains, was deep and

rapid. Some of the first men trying to cross were swept down, but saved by a projecting sandbank; the rest were got over in detachments, holding hands.

It is seldom that an official document brings a scene so vividly before the reader's mind. In the account of the only correspondent on the field,[9] the night march is described in detail. As the column drew near the river, it halted while the scouts went forward to search the drift and discover if the enemy was near it, and if any tidings could be had of the companies of the 58th which had marched from camp in the afternoon, and before nightfall had been seen near the river. The scouts were absent for more than an hour, and during that long interval the rain poured down in torrents; the darkness of the midnight was rent every now and then by vivid flashes of lightning, and the thunder rolled and crashed unceasingly.

At last the scouts returned, saying that they could find no trace of enemy or friend at the drift, but that the river was in flood and was still rising. The little column then continued its march and reached the river; the water, though very high, was still passable. How short was the time during which the ford could be crossed with any hope of safety was shown by the washing away of several of the men who first made the attempt. Most of these, however, were carried against a sandbank a short way lower down stream and saved. The sections of men were then made to lock arms together, and in this manner the passage was accomplished, the water reaching almost to the

[9] Mr. Carter.

shoulders How Colley worked at the ford, a passage in a letter of a few days later tells.

> At the drift there was some difficulty in crossing, for the river, flooded by the heavy rain, was deep and foaming. Some men were washed down, but got out again, and by making the men hold hands and cross in detachments I got them across, some hanging on to 'Peacock's' [his horse's] tail.[1]

Of course he makes the least of it, as he always did in every difficulty; but we can put the scene together from little bits which are to be found both in his own letters and in those of others.

> The passage of the flooded river in a wild night, alternately pelting rain with dazzling flashes and gleams of moonlight through ragged clouds, was something to remain in one's memory. We expected to be attacked every minute.[2]

Why no attack was made by the Boers during the passage of the troops at the drift has often been discussed. Doubtless they had had enough of it for one day. It has since been said, too, that as the storm increased in violence, the younger Boers refused to remain out on such a night. They declared the English troops could not cross the flooded river, that the horses had all been killed. General Smidt's account of the affair, given afterwards to an English officer, told the temper of his men. 'They (the young Boers) said, "What the h—ll" to me, and when my young men say that to me, I know I have got all there is to be got out of them.'

It was past midnight when the last man was

[1] February 9, 1881, to his wife. [2] *Ibid.*

across the drift. The river had demanded its toll of life and got it. Out of that shrunken little column, eight men perished in the flood. But the worst was over, and honour had not been lost. The guns were across. Six long miles of uphill road had still to be covered before the camp was gained. Of the soldiers who had crossed the Ingogo fourteen hours earlier, about three in every five recrossed the river. Of the horses, one in every four came back. On the long hill leading from the Ingogo to the camp, slippery as ice, filled with rocks and mud holes, the tired men and horses often slipped and fell. At last the horses could no longer draw the guns. Must the guns be left on the hillside to bear, when morning came, mute testimony, like stranded ships, to the leaden storm of the fight of yesterday? No; the men, tired though they were, 'readily and cheerfully attached themselves to the guns,' so ran the official report, 'and dragged them up the long hill from the Ingogo, when the horses were unable to do so.' When the artillery horses began to fall, Colley had hurried on to the camp to get assistance.

The moon went down, steady rain set in, and it became so pitchy dark that we lost the road repeatedly. I pushed on a little ahead to get lanterns, and food ready for the men, and fresh horses for the artillery, reached camp about 3 o'clock, and immediately returned to the men, and to see after the pickets that I had put out to cover the march. Wilkinson [his former A.D.C. and then adjutant of the 60th Rifles] rode out part of the way with me, and then left me, as I understood, to go and look after poor Mr. Pixley, who had been left badly wounded at a house near the drift.[3] It appears he was very keen about doing something for the

[3] But on the Mount Prospect side of the Ingogo; Wilkinson's crossing the river was not contemplated.

wounded, and had taken out some brandy, &c. After leaving me he crossed the river and rode up to where the wounded were on the hill, then returned, and tried to re-cross the river, which by this time had risen to a dangerous height, and in doing so was swept down and drowned, his pony scrambling out and making its way to Newcastle. It is altogether too sad—every personal friend I have made here gone.[4]

By the time this gallant officer reached the drift from his errand of mercy to the wounded, the dawn must have broken well over the dreary scene. No one can ever know what happened when he tried to cross for the fourth time that fatal river. Probably, worn out by prolonged efforts, which then had been continued through twenty-three hours, he was unable to cope with the flood by that time foaming down the channel. Of all those who fell on that day none gave his life more heroically than this last victim to the waters of the Ingogo.

It was daylight when the column reached camp. For all, save one man, there was rest in some form or other, but for the General there could be no rest. The dead had still to be buried; the wounded relieved; messages and telegrams sent; letters and despatches written; and who was there now left to do all this work, or even to help in doing it? Only one staff officer to look after the column, and one very young aide-de-camp. 'It is wonderful,' wrote the latter, two days after the return, 'to see how he [the General] gets through everything himself, and I only wish I could be of more use to him than I am. . . . I don't know how he manages to get on.'[5]

[4] February 9, 1881, to his wife.
[5] From Lieutenant Bruce Hamilton.

Nor do I—looking back at the realities of that time as the papers around me give them, and seeing the mass of writing which had to be done in these two days—know how he managed to get on during the days following Ingogo. The gravity of his task was now evident. The mobility of the enemy; the extraordinary accuracy of their rifle fire; their coolness, courage, and instinctive knowledge of war, the inbred results of free country life in these stern uplands which had taught them in many a hard fight with man and nature all they knew of war. Then he had these terrible losses to think of. It was only a fortnight since he left Newcastle, and already one in every three of the force had been killed or wounded. What is called the 'fortune of war,' or the advantages of position, could no longer account for all that had happened. His little force was not able to prevail against the Boers. Willing enough were the soldiers to do his bidding; to die if they could do nothing more, but that only made the hard fact of their inequality more painful to think of. Every hope of his life was being laid low by these Boer bullets, even as his friends and comrades had been stricken down by them. Of all who at first had sat round the little mess table he alone remained. And he has to bear it bravely all the time. 'I am more cheery than usual to people generally,' he writes to his wife, 'but . . . I feel as if I could not stand another day like these last. Every one I care for taken.' It was February 12, and he had just come back from the funeral of the officers killed at the Ingogo. Those who were near him in these days were never tired of speaking of his kind thoughtfulness; his quiet acceptance of the mis-

fortune war had brought him; his manly, undaunted, reliant bearing. Their enthusiasm in his service seemed, indeed, to increase as disasters thickened. 'So far as I am concerned,' wrote Mr. Ritchie, the Church of England chaplain, as brave and devoted a man as ever faced danger to alleviate suffering, 'I would undertake anything for him. He certainly has a wonderful faculty of attaching men to him. He is as brave as a lion, and as strong too. . . . After knowing him I should not care to serve under any other general.'

It is the same story wherever I turn to the correspondence of the time. He is just as cool and quiet during these days as he had been the month, the year, or twenty years earlier. His official letters to the Secretaries of State for War and the Colonies, and his private letters to these and other people at home, are as fully and carefully expressed, and enter into as many questions of South African politics, as though they had been written in his office at Maritzburg, under the most peaceful conditions of ordinary life. He seems to forget no one through all this time, nor to be confused or hurried in any portion of his work. The docketing of letters received is done as neatly and in as firm handwriting as ever. One who did not know him might easily have thought him hard and callous, so little did action or manner betray his feelings. A letter written on February 16 to his sister will show in some degree what was going on in his mind all this time.

Dearest Lily,—I ought to have written to you sooner, but when I turn away from my actual work I find it difficult to take up my pen. I have suffered terribly in these two actions. Every single officer who was immediately on my

staff, and with whom I and Edith had become intimate, is gone. Of the party of five who lived and messed together, I am the only one left. Colonel Deane, Major Poole, Captain MacGregor, Mr. Elwes, Mr. Wilkinson, Mr. Stuart—all gone. I wish now I had not brought up young Bruce Hamilton, for there seems a fatality about every one connected with me, and if he goes it will utterly break down poor Edith, whose favourite brother he is. I have to look cheerful, and I dare say am thought callous, and to-day am presiding at some races and sports, but sometimes it is very hard not to break down. However, reinforcements are now arriving, and I hope it will not be long before I have force enough to terminate this hateful war. I am glad to think I have succeeded so far in humanising it as far as it is possible to do so, and the wounded receive attention on both sides. . . I suppose Edith keeps you pretty well informed of personal matters, and the papers of my public actions, and I am afraid you will have to put up with seeing me well abused and run down. The Queen, however, was good enough to telegraph out her confidence, and the papers here are, on the whole, wonderfully moderate in their criticisms. . . . I could hardly have imagined how callous to public approbation or the reverse the terrible realities of the last few days have made me.

I search in vain among these papers for a single sentence of fault-finding with others, of censure upon subordinates, of ungenerous language towards his enemies. After the fight at the Ingogo, he writes to the Secretary of State: 'There can be no doubt that the Boers have some good and determined leaders, and their "Field Commandant General" Smidt seems an intelligent and fine man, courteous and humane in everything connected with the wounded, and gallant in action.'[6] And this calm mind and even balance of judgment he preserved up

[6] February 10, 1881, to Lord Kimberley.

to the last, never seeking excuse for failure in even the hint or the hesitation of a doubt upon other men. I believe, nay, I feel certain, that had it been his fate to survive the day of Majuba, no reproach to others would have marred the eloquence of his silence. Wherever his picture is given in the utterances of contemporary actors, or in his own correspondence, we see him fixed in purpose, unshaken in resolve, generous to all, bearing upon his shoulders many loads, and striving manfully for the honour of his country and the reputation of her soldiers.

The action of the Ingogo was the natural result of the repulse at Lang's Nek. The Boers were only novices in the business of tactics, but they were apt students, and the interruption of communication, which sooner or later they were bound to attempt, was certain, whenever it occurred, to bring on another action.

I was bound not to submit to be blockaded without an effort to open the road, otherwise fifty men might blockade an army, and having no sufficient cavalry force—my cruel want in these last few days—could only move as I did with a fairly strong infantry and artillery force. My information did not lead me to expect more than a small force—of 200 men at the outside—sent just to harass me, but it would now appear that the Boer movement was really part of a larger one directed against our reinforcements. Once engaged, it was difficult with my small force and want of cavalry to draw off, especially as they were constantly receiving reinforcements; and I took the decision within ten minutes, almost, after we were seriously engaged, to hold the plateau till night, trusting that the losses the Boers would suffer in attacking would sicken them of it.

The Boers all hurried down from the Nek to help their friends, and then when they found that I had returned to camp hurried back again in still greater haste, fearing I

might attack there in their absence. Practically, I believe the losses they suffered there had much to say to their not attacking the reinforcements as they had intended to do, and the road has been almost unmolested since.

Ritchie behaved right well again. He was in the Boer camp and saw Joubert and other Boer leaders. The Boers had made all preparations for renewing the attack with overwhelming forces the next morning, and when Ritchie asked leave to send away the wounded, said, Yes, the wounded might go, but nothing else—and 'Mr. Colley' and the guns must remain. Their surprise and disappointment when informed that 'Mr. Colley' and the guns were safe back in camp was amusing.[7]

In a few letters of the time, omitted in this memoir through want of space, I have found reference to many matters connected with the actions at Lang's Nek and the Ingogo which are still interesting evidences of the mind and character of their writer. Some of these letters relate to certain incidents in the campaign—inevitable *contretemps* occurring in the progress of all military action in the field—which throw light upon the non-success of the first attempt upon Lang's Nek. Alluding to a particular episode in that action, the General added: 'Something of this will doubtless leak out, for I have heard men and officers discussing it. But I would ten thousand times rather any amount of criticism were heaped on me than one word cast at him. I can retrieve myself, he cannot.' And again, replying to a letter in which a correspondent had warmly resented certain criticisms that had appeared in a Natal newspaper upon his action, he wrote: 'I do not see what there is in the "Witness" criticisms that has so excited your wrath. . . . If you believe in me, believe that I can

[7] February 9-19, 1881, to his wife.

live them down, and don't read them if they worry you!'

Alas! the fortune of war, which in this campaign had always set persistently against him, was soon destined to deny him the chance of living down criticism or retrieving failure.[8]

[8] Major Brownlow wrote to General Newdigate June 10, 1881, as follows:

'I was most fortunate in serving under a man like Sir George Colley, who, whatever his misfortunes, gave every one credit for doing his best, unless he found out to the contrary.

'I think it is not generally known here that if his orders had been carried out at Lang's Nek, there is little doubt we should have won the day.'

Colley's despatch after the Ingogo affair, and a letter from Lieutenant Bruce Hamilton, are given in Appendix.

CHAPTER XV

NEGOTIATION

The lesson of Ingogo—Diplomatic position—The reinforcements—Kruger's letter—Colley meets Wood at Newcastle—Proposals for settlement of Transvaal—Colley's reply to Boer leaders.—Return to Mount Prospect—Amajuba.

ALTHOUGH in a purely technical sense the fight on the plateau might be regarded as a drawn battle, still there can be little doubt that that action did more to discourage our troops and to elate the Boers than anything that had yet happened in this campaign. A new power had been developed in war—the mounted rifleman—and a new method of tactics had been found. Military science had heretofore imagined that the rifle was the peculiar adjunct of modern armies, the special prerogative of civilisation as applied to the battlefield. But no soldier, scientific or otherwise, had gone the length of supposing that the rifle, unaided by artillery, could do what it had done at the Ingogo. Still less was it imagined that it could achieve such results in the hands of men untrained in any of the formations, movements, and tactical exercises of the field. Ingogo had shown once more that power in war depends not alone upon the weapon, but on the man who uses it; that muscle and sinew, soundness of wind and keenness of sight, have just as much to say to victory as in the old Plantagenet days when the yeomen and peasant soldiers of England

had brought to confusion all the trained and expert intelligence of military mediævalism. This new weapon which science had imagined was always to be on the side of collective intelligence had suddenly gone over to individual effort, backed by the old-world forces of bodily strength and muscular fibre.

But there was yet another lesson which this action was destined to teach the two little armies fronting each other within the borders of Natal—a lesson taught before on many fields from Marathon to Morat. No man understands so well as the individual actors in a battle what are the exact points between them in the game they are waging. They do not argue it out on principles of schools or theories of tactics—they know it. These two guns, spotted all over with the bullet splashes of the Boer rifles, needed no lecturer to point their moral to the men who saw them. Nor did the Boers require to be told what their skill of straight shooting and their power of adapting tactics to terrain really meant. After the battle of Ingogo the balance of belief in themselves, which means so much to soldiers in war, swung as dangerously low on one side as it rose high on the other.

While Colley had naturally to make the best of the situation to his troops, his letters to the authorities at home indicate the effect upon his own views of the Ingogo. He writes to the Secretary of State for War eight days afterwards:

I find that my despatches intended for the last steamer have missed it, owing to temporary interruptions in our communications, so that they will go with this letter. I cannot add much to what I have said in them. No soldiers could possibly fight more steadily than the men of the 58th and 60th have done in these two engagements—and they

are as cheery and confident as ever—but the want of good mounted troops told very heavily against us, and our soldiers are not as trained skirmishers and shots as the majority of these Boers, who from their childhood have lived in the country, and to a great extent by their guns, and are used to stalking and shooting deer.

Our artillery does not at all compensate for our want of mounted troops, for the Boers keep cover too well, and when exposed move too rapidly and in too loose order, to give artillery much chance. . . . I have not much faith in mounted infantry for this work. They are excellent as against Kaffirs, but they are no match for the Boers, being worse riders and worse shots. The Boers think little of them, and they themselves acquire a sense of inferiority and a want of confidence in themselves which is fatal.[1]

This remark, though it referred particularly to mounted infantry, really applied to every soldier who had fought at Lang's Nek and the Ingogo.

By February 12, parties of Boers had moved south towards the ridge of the Biggarsberg, a range of steep but narrow hills which lies about midway between Newcastle and Ladysmith, and nearly sixty miles distant from Mount Prospect. For some days it appeared probable this movement meant an attack upon the reinforcements which were now moving up country from Durban to Newcastle. But they were strong reinforcements, sent from India and from England as soon as the first intimation of the Boer revolt had reached home—two regiments of infantry, one of cavalry, Naval Brigade with two guns. In view of the possibility of Boer opposition south of Newcastle, Colley directed these reinforcements to concentrate at the Biggarsberg, in a strong position which he had already occupied with the Natal

[1] Mount Prospect, February 16, 1881, to Mr. Childers.

Mounted Police. Thence the troops were to continue their advance in one column, under an officer whose name as a successful leader had already become well known throughout South Africa—Colonel Sir Evelyn Wood. Behind these foremost troops, but a good way further back, other regiments of infantry and cavalry were moving up the long road from Maritzburg; but progress was much retarded by bad roads and swollen streams, and another three or four weeks must elapse before a really effective force, unshaken in morale, could be concentrated at Newcastle.

We must turn now from the military events which had so rapidly developed in the northern angle of Natal, to consider the diplomatic position which the Transvaal question had meanwhile assumed. It has already been stated that the final straw on the back of Boer discontent had been the refusal of the Liberal Government to reverse in office that act of annexation which out of office they had so trenchantly denounced. There can be little doubt that this refusal had not been the unanimous decision of the Cabinet. The Cabinet tail, in the matter of the retention of the Transvaal, had wagged the Government dog. The bursting of the Boer storm, and the complete collapse of British authority from one end of the country to the other, gave immediate strength to those in the Government and among the outside Liberal party who had previously been in favour of arrangement with the Boers. Meantime the attitude taken up by the whole Dutch people throughout South Africa was very significant. Meetings were held in every part of the Cape Colony, and resolutions were passed, without dissenting voice, expressing sympathy with the Transvaal Boers, and urging the

immediate adoption of peaceful measures in the settlement of the dispute.

In a diplomatic sense, as well as in their military measures, the Boers were showing considerable aptitude. Each post from the Transvaal brought powerful appeals from the leaders, detailing the efforts made in the past to obtain a hearing for their grievances; the neglect with which these efforts had been met; and the perverted views regarding themselves and their cause which had been sent out by their enemies to the world. As everybody was now listening where nobody had listened before, the effect of these Boer manifestoes on public opinion was marked and rapid. That the English Government had from the first inception of the strife made up its mind to grant some redress is certain. The man who most of all had been the champion of the Transvaal Dutch, Mr. Courtney, had now joined the Government, and as it was an open secret that he had already, when the Liberal Ministry was first formed, declined to take office, because the Government would not agree to give back independence to the Transvaal, this appointment was looked upon as strong indication of change in the councils of the Empire. So, indeed, Colley read it on January 23, five days before Lang's Nek. His remark on reading the appointment was significant:

> X. tells me the tone [at home] is determined, not violent; that Russell has written to the papers in favour of the Boers; and that Courtney, the Liberal member who has always supported the Boers and encouraged them to resist if not to revolt, has been taken into the Ministry. This looks curious. Either they are shutting his mouth or mean

to adopt his views. I have not had a word of any kind from either Colonial or War Secretaries, and am thus left entirely unfettered and to my own discretion. Whether this is confidence in me, or timidity and fear of incurring responsibility on their part, I do not know; but in any case it is an arrangement that suits me perfectly—and if I do make a mess I hope I shall know how to bear failure.'[2]

The truth was, the Government found themselves beset with difficulties. The sin of their neglect to face the situation in the Transvaal when they assumed office ten months earlier had been brought quickly home to them. They could, of course, point to the continued receipt of optimist opinion from the Administrator of the Transvaal, and other sources of South African intelligence; but looking the whole question fairly in the face, it cannot be denied that Ministers had received warning that the condition of affairs in the Transvaal was a source of constant danger. No doubt the exigencies of party government made the position a difficult one; but if it be said that they had decided to wait upon events—to watch, as it is commonly called, how the cat was going to jump—then it is very clear that the danger of the dilemma was in no way lessened.

Nothing connected with the Transvaal revolt has been more discussed than the negotiations which, after much vicissitude and interruption, ultimately resulted in the peace of Mount Prospect, or, as its opponents called it, the capitulation of Downing Street. I propose to enter here a *résumé* of matters relating to the inception of these negotiations, and their progress up to the day of Majuba, giving to

[2] Newcastle, January 23, 1881, to his wife.

the official documents which have already been published in blue-books the light and explanation afforded by private documents in my possession.

The earliest indication of a readiness on the part of the Government to come to terms with the Boers appears to have been conveyed in a telegraphic message from Lord Kimberley to Mr. Blyth, the London agent of Mr. Brand (President of the Orange Free State), whose efforts in the cause of peace had been unceasing, from the earliest symptoms of active resistance on the part of the Boers in December. The letter ran as follows:

Downing Street: January 10.

In returning to you the telegram which you left here this morning for the Earl of Kimberley's perusal, I am desired by his lordship to request that you will inform President Brand that Her Majesty's Government have received with pleasure this expression of his friendly sentiments, and that, provided only the Boers will desist from their armed opposition to the Queen's authority, Her Majesty's Government do not despair of making a satisfactory arrangement.

This message was telegraphed the same day to Mr. Brand. He telegraphed in reply to Mr. Blyth:

January 11.

Give my thanks to Government for kind expression, and communicate to them that I think not a moment should be lost, and some one, say Chief Justice de Villiers of Capetown, be sent to the Transvaal burghers by the Government with a view of stopping further collision, and with a clear and definite proposal for the settlement. Moments are precious. . . .

On this being communicated to the Colonial

Office, the following letter was sent to the Consul for the Orange Free State:

January 14.

. . . I am desired to state that if the condition mentioned in my previous letters to you as to the cessation of armed opposition to the Queen's authority were complied with, H.M.G. would consider whether the settlement of present difficulties could be brought about by the appointment of a Special Commissioner.

President Brand replies:

January 16.

The only way in which I believe further bloodshed and the great calamities to South Africa which I dread to contemplate can be prevented is, in my opinion, that the British Government make a clear and distinct proposal to the Transvaal people without delay.

On January 21 Lord Kimberley informs President Brand, through the Consul, that he can add nothing to his previous communication. On January 26 Lord Kimberley telegraphs to Sir Hercules Robinson, who had now arrived at the Cape as Governor:

. . . Following telegram from President Brand. . .

'Is it not possible to offer to the people of Transvaal through the High Commissioner, Sir Hercules Robinson, who is now in Capetown, certain terms and conditions, provided they cease from armed opposition, making it clear to them how this is to be understood?'

I have to instruct you to inform President Brand that if armed opposition should at once cease, H.M.G. would thereupon endeavour to frame such a scheme as in their belief would satisfy all enlightened friends of the Transvaal community.

This message is telegraphed by the Cape Governor to President Brand on January 27. On the 28th

President Brand telegraphs to the Governor at Capetown :

I read your Excellency's telegram. . . . Don't your Excellency think it will be good to inform the Transvaal people without delay of the contents, explaining to them what is meant by forthwith ceasing armed opposition ? From the telegram published yesterday and dated Pietermaritzburg, it would appear that Sir G. Pomeroy-Colley was preparing to move forward into the Transvaal, and I am afraid that unless some effort is made to explain to the Transvaal people the contents of your Excellency's telegram, and upon what terms they are forthwith to cease armed opposition, a further collision will take place, and the satisfactory arrangements which H.M.G. contemplates may become more difficult. If your Excellency can devise some means by which the object which your Excellency hopes to attain can be effected at once, and the armed opposition cease, so that there is time and opportunity to make the scheme mentioned . . . known to them, much perhaps may be effected. I think every moment is precious. . . . Forgive the urgency with which I express myself, but no time can now be lost.

On the same day Sir Hercules Robinson replies that with the receipt of above message a telegram had also come from Natal, reporting that a battle was taking place at Lang's Nek. He suggests that the President should give immediate and widespread publicity to the message of Government. Here then, for the moment, all peaceful effort ceased, and it will be well at this point to examine this first series of messages more closely before taking up a few days later the suspended thread of negotiations.

What the English Government most feared at this time was the complication of the question by the open adherence to the Boer cause of the Orange Free State, and even of the Dutch burghers in the Cape Colony. To prevent or even to delay co-operation

which might bring a mass of Boers from the Free State down upon Newcastle and Natal in rear of Colley's force, and on the flank of reinforcements marching to join him from Maritzburg, was an object of pressing necessity. The position of Lang's Nek once won, matters, they thought, would become easier. Thus we find that of all these messages and proposals from and to Mr. Brand not one was sent or repeated to Colley, nor is he informed of them at all. His letters written during the period covered by these messages of negotiation are all significant of complete freedom of action in the absence of any instructions from Government at home. On January 17, he writes:

> As to what you say of the political situation, I have had nothing from home to indicate any intention of interference. Lord K. has simply sent me his replies to various deputations without comment, and I understand them as a civil way of telling people that it rests with the Boers to avoid bloodshed by not fighting but caving in.[3]

Five days later, on the 23rd, we have already seen how 'entirely unfettered' he considered himself in all respects to be in the movement he was about to begin against Lang's Nek. We shall now resume the record of negotiations which the fight of January 28 for the moment stopped.

After Lang's Nek there was a pause. The bolt had been shot and the mark missed. It is inevitable that when the unforeseen occurs it takes some time to reset the political pieces, and to begin anew the game of diplomacy. This time the beginning was between Colley and the President of the Free State,

[3] Newcastle, to his wife.

Mr. Brand. Rumours of Boer movement from the Free State in the direction of Newcastle had been prevalent for some days past. On February 3, Colley telegraphed Mr. Brand referring to these rumours, and received on the same day a message denying the truth of the alleged invasion from the Orange Free State. The President then added:

> I once more would implore your Excellency to endeavour to prevent further bloodshed. . . . Now that you have a large force, your Excellency can, with the generosity which such a powerful nation as Great Britain can well afford, inform the Transvaal people of the contents of the telegrams which Lord Kimberley sent through H.E. Sir Hercules Robinson, and do your best to bring the question to an amicable termination. You will never regret it. May God move the hearts of all to prevent the great calamities which will happen if some means is not found to avert them.

The same day, February 3, Colley telegraphed Sir Hercules Robinson that Brand had asked him to make known certain telegrams sent by Lord Kimberley to the Transvaal people; that he, Colley, had no knowledge of such telegrams; and he begs they may be sent to him if they exist.

On February 4 Robinson sends Colley a copy of Lord Kimberley's message beginning, 'Inform President that if armed opposition cease,' &c.; and on the same day Colley, replying to President Brand, thanks him for his message, and tells him that before he had advanced to Lang's Nek he had made an earnest appeal to the Boer leaders to prevent useless bloodshed, by ceasing armed opposition and not prolonging hopeless resistance; that he will probably make another effort before again advancing. Meanwhile, he trusts the President will give every publicity to the

message which the Secretary of State had sent to him.

On February 5, Brand thanks Colley for his message; begs him to continue efforts towards peaceful settlement; says that Colley has better means of letting the Transvaal people know the intentions of the British Government, and adds this pertinent observation:

> Besides, I do not see what I can communicate to the people unless something definite is known to me. Show me what I can do, and I shall be most willing to assist.
>
> . . . Your telegram gives me hope that you will consider whether what I suggest cannot be tried. Lord Kimberley's telegram says that provided they cease armed opposition he has a scheme which will give satisfaction to all enlightened friends of the Transvaal. It cannot be expected that after they have gone so far they will cease armed opposition unless some guarantee is given them that they will not be treated as rebels. If that assurance is given them, and the scheme which Her Majesty's Government has in contemplation is made known to them, I venture to hope that our prayers may be heard. If your Excellency agrees with what I state let me know, and I shall communicate it at once by express to Paul Kruger. In the meantime do not move into the Transvaal. . . .

Colley replied on the same day, February 5:

> I fear I can give no such assurance as your Honour proposes, and can add nothing to Lord Kimberley's words, 'Cessation of armed resistance must precede everything.'

On the same date Colley telegraphed Lord Kimberley:

> Have received two long telegrams from Brand earnestly urging that I should communicate your reply to him to Boers, state nature of scheme, and guarantee their not being

treated as rebels if they submit. I have replied that I can give no such assurance, and can add nothing to your words, but suggested he may do good by making your reply known through Transvaal.

Again on February 5, Brand telegraphed Colley, and urged that if the Boers are to be treated as rebels or insurgents they will be driven to desperation, and fight to the bitter end. He thinks that if a guarantee be given them on that head there is every hope of the question being solved.

On the same day Lord Kimberley telegraphed Colley:

I think it right to intimate to you, as you have instructions to assume the functions of Governor when you are able to enter the Transvaal, that whenever you may succeed in re-establishing the Queen's authority there, all questions affecting the future administration and settlement of the country, as well as questions as to dealing with those who have taken part against the Government, should be reserved by you for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government.

On February 7, Colley telegraphs Kimberley:

I have received your telegram of 5th instant, which shall be attended to. I have purposed, with a view to the speedy pacification of the country, to publish, on entering the country, through the landdrost of each district which the investing army occupies, a promise of amnesty to all people of the district (with certain few names excepted) who shall return to their homes and will sign a declaration of loyalty to the Queen; issuing, however, no proclamation until the Queen's authority has been re-established throughout the country and I shall have received your instructions. I further propose to appoint a day for the inhabitants of the occupied districts to attend before their magistrates and sign such declaration, and then to let them choose two of their number to represent to me their views and their alleged griev-

ances for the consideration of H.M. Government. I would take care to see the spokesman of each district separately, and to avoid giving the representatives any status as a body, but I think that I might thus both sound the general feeling and test the practicability and probable character of an elected body, should any such be hereafter considered desirable. Do you approve this, or must all questions of amnesty be deferred until the Queen's authority is re-established throughout the country?

On February 8, Kimberley telegraphs Colley:

Have received your telegram of 5th inst. Inform President Brand that H.M. Government will be ready to give all reasonable guarantees as to treatment of Boers after submission, if they cease from armed opposition, and that a scheme will be framed for the permanent friendly settlement of difficulties. Add also that H.M. Government will be glad if President will communicate to leaders of Boers this as well as former messages addressed to him.

On February 9, this message was transmitted to Brand by Colley. On the same day Kimberley telegraphed Colley, in answer to his inquiry about an amnesty:

In reply to your telegram of the 7th inst. You should confine yourself to promising protection to the inhabitants of the districts occupied, as long as they behave peaceably, reserving all further questions for instructions from home.

And here again came the stern voice of war into the question. The last message reached Colley on the day following the Ingogo engagement. The result of that fight had by no means modified the opinion held by Colley as to the lines upon which policy should move to the solution of the Transvaal difficulty. On February 12 he thus writes to the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

President Brand seems very hopeful that your last telegram and message sent through him (see p. 329) will bring about some settlement. I imagine the question will be what your lordship means by 'reasonable guarantees' for their treatment. I take it the Boer leaders will not submit unless they are assured they will not be singled out for punishment, and on the other hand I imagine that no settlement of the Transvaal can be safe or permanent which leaves them there as the recognised and successful leaders of the revolt. So long as they retain any position of influence in the country, so long, I fear, will the loyal and moderate parties be afraid to come forward.[4]

This was the real crux. If the Transvaal was to be retained, the influence and position of the successful leaders presented a serious difficulty. And a decision on the part of the Government as to the future of the country appeared to be a necessary preliminary to further negotiation.

On February 12 a letter of considerable importance was addressed to Colley by the Boer Provisional Government in the Transvaal. It appears in the blue-book as under:

Translation.

Headquarters: February 12, 1881.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—Having arrived here at headquarters, and having examined the several positions taken by the Honourable P. J. Joubert, Commandant-General of the Burghers of the South African Republic, I have found that we are compelled against our will to proceed in a bloody combat, and that our positions as taken are of that nature that we cannot cease to persevere in the way of self-defence as once adopted by us so far as our God will give us strength to do so.

Your Excellency, we know that all our intentions, letters, or whatever else, have failed to attain the true object because

[4] Mount Prospect, February 12, 1881, to Lord Kimberley.

they have been erroneously represented and wrongly understood by the Government of the people of England. It is for this reason that we fear to forward to your Excellency these lines. But, your Excellency, I should not be able to be answerable before my God if I did not attempt once more to make known to your Excellency our meaning, knowing that it is in your power to enable us to withdraw from the positions taken up by us. The people have repeatedly declared their will, upon the cancellation of the Act of Annexation, to co-operate with Her Majesty's Government in everything which can tend to the welfare of South Africa. Unhappily the people were not in a position to accomplish their good intentions, because they were unlawfully attacked and forced to self-defence. We do not wish to seek a quarrel with the Imperial Government, but cannot do otherwise than offer our last drop of blood for our just rights, as every Englishman would do. We know that the noble English nation, when once truth and justice reach them, will stand on our side. We are so firmly assured of this that we should not hesitate to submit to a Royal Commission of Inquiry, who we know will place us in our just rights; and, therefore, we are prepared, whenever your Excellency commands that Her Majesty's troops be immediately withdrawn from our country, to allow them to retire with all honours, and we ourselves will leave the positions as taken up by us. Should, however, the annexation be persevered in, and the spilling of blood be proceeded with by you, we, subject to the will of God, will bow to our fate, and to the last man combat against the injustice and violence done to us, and throw entirely on your shoulders the responsibility of all the miseries which will befall this country.

S. J. P. KRUGER,
Vice-President.

W. EDUARD BOK,
State Secretary.

To
His Excellency,
SIR GEORGE POMEROY-COLLEY, &c., &c.
Headquarters, Lang's Nek.

This letter, written evidently at Lang's Nek, reached Colley on the following day, February 13. It was the first tangible proposal which in the existing military situation could possibly have been made a basis of a pacific settlement. There can be little doubt that it was the outcome of the prayers and proposals for peaceful arrangement made by President Brand to Lord Kimberley, and that it was the immediate result of the message sent by Lord Kimberley to Colley on February 8, received by him on the 9th, and transmitted same day to President Brand. We can further trace the matter by means of a telegram addressed to Mr. Donald Currie by Mr. Brand, dated

February 14, 1.40 P.M.

On Wednesday night I sent off an express to Kruger, Pretorius, and Joubert, informing them of Lord Kimberley's telegram of the 8th through Sir George Colley. They will have received my letter only yesterday (13th), and I hope they will have written to Sir George Colley. That letter cannot reach His Excellency before to-day or to-morrow, and I cannot expect answer before Wednesday or Thursday.

Mr. Brand's express would appear to have reached the Boer Government one day earlier, for on February 13, Kruger's letter referring to the Royal Commission was in Colley's hands at Mount Prospect, and on the same day its purport was telegraphed to Lord Kimberley, and received at the Colonial Office next day, February 14.

On that night Colley attempted to ride from Mount Prospect to Newcastle, under cover of a thick mist which hung on the ground, although there was a moon almost at its full overhead. It was his intention to cross the Buffalo River in rear of Mount

Prospect, and thence by a shorter line, but one only practicable for horses and footmen, to Newcastle, recrossing the river near the latter place. This movement was of course kept a profound secret, and the party slipped away from camp almost unperceived. When, however, the lower ground of the Buffalo valley was reached, it was found that the fog did not hang in the valley, and the party turned back to camp. That Colley was desirous of getting to Newcastle is evident. The telegraph had now been cut by the Boers, who were reported to be in force between that place and the Biggarsberg. The reinforcements had been ordered to concentrate south of that mountain. Colonel Sir Evelyn Wood was hurrying up from Maritzburg to join them there, and a fight at that ridge might take place any day. For the moment, at least, it looked as though the prospect of fighting lay on the Natal side, and not on the Lang's Nek side, of Newcastle.

In a letter written to Colonel Sir Evelyn Wood on February 16, Colley thus describes the situation, and discusses the probable course of events:

I hope you have reached the Biggarsberg all right, and found the Indian reinforcements concentrated there. You were quite right to push up as you did, and I was just about to telegraph to you when I got your message. I never believed either the Landsman's Drift or Van Reenan's Pass shaves—the former because the Buffalo is too uncertain just now for them to risk crossing it in force, and, secondly, because since my advance they have cleared out of Utrecht and those parts, and everything I have seen of their strategy indicates that they cling nervously to their communications with the Free State and with Heidelberg. The latter rumour I equally disbelieved, because I think President Brand and the moderate party in the Free State, although

not strong enough to prevent large numbers of individual Boers joining the Transvaal forces, are strong enough to prevent such a violation of territory as would almost inevitably involve them in the war. . . .

But the attempt to intercept the communications somewhere on the Ingegane, working round Newcastle and keeping the Free State mountains at their back, seemed a likely one enough. . . .

I may warn you that you will find them very fairly drilled and in hand, with some excellent leaders; not at all wanting in courage, either in galloping boldly under fire to seize an advantageous position, or in creeping close up to our skirmishing line wherever the ground gives any chance; and very accurate shooters. However, you have the advantage of two first-class regiments, one of which has probably done more fighting and rough skirmishing than any in the Service, and of some cavalry—which has been my terrible want; and with yourself to direct them I have no fear of the result. I don't think you will miss artillery much; they generally keep too good cover or move too rapidly and in too loose order to give it much chance. I believe some of our shells killed a few horses in the valley the first day, but I doubt if any damage to speak of was inflicted by them on the men, and I fear the Boers are beginning to discover this.

I shall be very anxious now to hear something of your proposed movements, and I trust you will be able to communicate with me. If you propose to advance with the force you now have, I shall probably await you here or at Newcastle, but if you think further reinforcement necessary, and your advance is likely to be delayed in consequence, I shall probably try and find means of joining you. We are amply supplied here, so you need not let anxiety on that account hasten you; but at the same time I shall, of course, be glad to receive reinforcements which will enable us to do something more than just hold our camp, and long-continued inaction gives more time and opportunity for mischief in the Free State, Zululand, &c.

You will probably have better information than I have of the Boer force before you, but I hear it variously estimated

at from 800 to 1,500. About 200 Boers left this two days ago, apparently to join it. . . .

Good-bye, and wishing you all luck, I remain

Ever yours,

G. POMEROY-COLLEY.[5]

On the night following the despatch of this letter Colley rode into Newcastle, arriving early on the morning of the 17th, and meeting there Colonel Sir Evelyn Wood, who arrived from the Biggarsberg without having seen any sign of the enemy either on the mountain or at the River Ingegane, where opposition had been most expected.

At this point it will be well to pause and look around at the various factors, national and individual, concerned in the subsequent course of events. Turning to the political situation generally existing throughout South Africa, it could not be regarded as otherwise than extremely grave. The Free State was giving ominous warnings of increasing restiveness under the moderating influence of Mr. Brand, and everywhere through the Cape Colony, up to Capetown itself, the expressions of sympathy with the Transvaal Boers, and protests against their coercion, were gaining in force and friendliness every day. That civil war throughout South Africa might be the result of protracted operations was a contingency which the Government could not neglect.

On the side of the Boers the situation was a very simple one. They could not be expected to consent to withdraw from a struggle for their independence, which after three years of unavailing protest they had deliberately entered upon, except under guarantees for the recognition of that independence, and assur-

[5] Mount Prospect, February 16, 1881, to Colonel Sir Evelyn Wood.

ances of personal immunity from any punishment for their revolt. The extraordinary success that had hitherto marked all their efforts in this war made it all the more unlikely that the leaders would agree to enter upon negotiations under any other conditions.

But when we turn to the side of the English Government, it is clear that the whole development of the military situation from Bronkerspruit to Ingogo had made even the approach to peaceful arrangement a most difficult undertaking. It was not the shutting up of the Transvaal garrisons that had really made negotiation so impossible, it was the defeat of British troops; and particularly had the opening encounter at Bronkerspruit that effect. This was regarded as an affront upon national honour which nothing but submission could atone for. A single victory on our side would have made compromise easy, but every defeat barred the diplomatic roadway as completely as in a military sense it blocked the movement into the Transvaal. That this was felt by the Government there can be no doubt. Much more, then, must it have impressed the military authorities on the spot, and particularly the man on whose shoulders rested all the burden of military responsibility, Sir George Pomeroy-Colley. Before everything else he was a soldier. No soldier living carried further or rated higher the necessities of military honour, considerations which it was his belief no State could afford to disregard.

The military situation was as follows: Entrenched at Mount Prospect were about 800 troops—the original column of invasion, less the losses at Lang's Nek and the Ingogo; at Newcastle two complete battalions

of infantry, a regiment of cavalry, a reinforcement for the Naval Brigade with two guns, and some infantry drafts. On the road from Durban were two more infantry battalions, a regiment of cavalry, a force of mounted infantry, and a battery of artillery destined to form the second column of invasion under Sir Evelyn Wood. In addition to these troops, two regiments of cavalry and 1,500 infantry were about to leave England and India for Natal. In the Transvaal no change had taken place. The garrisons at Wakkerstroom, Standerton, Rustenberg, Leydenberg, Pretoria, and Potchefstroom were still closely invested. With the exception of Potchefstroom all were well supplied with food. That place, however, was known to be already short of supplies. On the Boer side the position at Lang's Nek had been strengthened, both in defences and in numbers of men. The forces sent south of Newcastle had been ordered back to the Nek. It was evident the Boer leaders had determined to resist to the utmost at that point.

Bearing these matters in mind, we will now take up the narrative again on the morning of February 17, when, as we have already seen, Sir George Colley met and had a long interview with Sir Evelyn Wood at Newcastle. For the first time Colley heard what the 'scheme' or Government proposal for the settlement of the Transvaal really meant. It was on lines which he had not contemplated and did not approve. On the 18th he wrote to the Secretary of State, going into the reasons that seemed to him to render the proposed scheme impossible. The letter shows his mind so fully at the moment that it is worthy of attention.

Newcastle: February 18.

I rode in yesterday morning to meet Sir E. Wood in case he made his way in, or to be at hand in case Newcastle was seriously threatened, and in the afternoon met Sir Evelyn, who had found no enemy on his road. I gather from him that the scheme to which you refer in your private note, and probably in the telegrams I have lately received, contemplates a subdivision of the Transvaal, leaving the purely Dutch districts under independent rule, but bringing all the native border districts under British rule. This was only the general impression conveyed to me by Sir Evelyn, who did not seem clear about details. But I have ventured to telegraph very earnestly to your lordship against any such scheme, which I fear would lead to endless difficulties. Without some knowledge of detail it is of course impossible to judge, but I cannot imagine any division that would not be open to the gravest inconveniences. . . .

I would most earnestly urge on your lordship that, whatever may be decided regarding the Transvaal, it may be dealt with as a whole, for I am certain that no difficulties you will have to contend against will be so great as those arising from any attempted division. And I would still more earnestly urge on your lordship that you should not commit yourself to any scheme until you have had the opportunity of hearing the wishes and views of the people through other spokesmen than Joubert, Kruger, and his party; for no moderate man, and no loyal man, will dare to speak so long as they are the accepted representatives of the Transvaal people. . . .

Personally I would recommend one of two solutions of the present difficulties. Either accept the Boer programme and give them back the Republic 'under British protection,' and under certain guarantees which would make it almost a British province, or adhere to the annexation but give them a more liberal constitution (the latter being the course I would recommend), and keeping certain districts under the special government of the High Commissioner. But, at the risk of seeming presumptuous, I do most earnestly urge your lordship to try and get at a fairly representative body of

the people, collected *not* under the tyrannical dictatorship of the Triumvirate, and feel their pulse, before you commit yourself to anything.

I can recommend nothing better than I have already suggested in a telegram and letter of about a fortnight back, and I do trust your lordship will give that or something of the kind a trial, not perhaps under me—for I can see many objections to a military governor (though I honestly believe that this war will have strengthened rather than weakened the friendly feeling which Joubert told Mr. Ritchie existed towards myself personally in the country), and your lordship will have no difficulty in laying your hand on trained diplomatists and governors of far higher ability and experience—but under some one who has experience, clear-sightedness, and sympathetic power enough to get at the feeling of the mass of the people underneath the cuckoo notes which they repeat as Jorrissen and Co. pull the strings. I have thought earnestly and deeply over the future of the Transvaal since I have been obliged to take such a painfully active part in its affairs, and that must be my excuse for writing to your lordship as I have done.

I trust, however, I need not add that whatever views your lordship may finally adopt, I will, so long as I retain my present position, do my best to give effect to. If I honestly feel that I cannot make what I am asked to do succeed, I am sure your lordship will not think the worse of me if I tell your lordship so, and ask that it may be entrusted to other and more competent hands.[7]

On the same day he writes to his wife with regard to the allusion as to his possible resignation: 'I don't know if you will think I have written too strongly, but I would rather resign than carry out the scheme I understand to be contemplated. . . . I know that by the time this reaches home I shall have broken the back of the military resistance, and my words may carry more weight than they would just now.'

[7] To Lord Kimberley.

We have seen that on February 13 Colley telegraphed to Lord Kimberley the purport of the letter he had that day received from Mr. Kruger. On the 14th and 16th telegraphic communication was interrupted between Mount Prospect and Maritzburg; on the 15th it would appear that for a few hours it was open, but it was now uncertain, as the Boers were in strength to the south of Newcastle. But on the 17th Colley was in Newcastle; the Boers had withdrawn from the road, and communication was again restored. On February 16, Lord Kimberley telegraphed Colley as follows:

I have received your telegram of 13th instant. Inform Kruger that if Boers will desist from armed opposition we shall be quite ready to appoint Commissioners with extensive powers, and who may develop the scheme referred to in my telegram to you of the 8th instant. Add that if this proposal is accepted you are authorised to agree to suspension of hostilities.

At the same time the Secretary of State telegraphed the same message to Sir Evelyn Wood, giving also the *précis* of Mr. Kruger's letter received from Colley on the 14th, and directing that if communication with Colley was still interrupted, Wood was to forward this message to the Boer leaders 'by the most expeditious means.' A similar telegram was sent to President Brand through Sir Hercules Robinson. Later on the same day the Minister of War telegraphed Colley:

With reference to Lord Kimberley's telegram as respects the interval before reply from Boers is received, we do not bind your discretion, but we are anxious for your making arrangements to avoid effusion of blood.

On February 17, Colley telegraphed from Newcastle to Lord Kimberley, acknowledged receipt of message to Wood of the previous day (apparently he had not received the one sent to himself), and added that he 'will communicate with Kruger accordingly.' This message reached the Colonial Office at 8 P.M., 17th. On the 18th no message appears to have been received by Colley from the Colonial Office, but he telegraphed a long message dealing with the proposed scheme, and giving the substance of what he considered should be the basis of future settlement—viz., continuance of annexation and more liberal constitution, &c., as set forth in his letter of that date already quoted.

On February 19, Colley sent Lord Kimberley this telegram:

> Latter part of your telegram of 16th to Wood not understood. There can be no hostilities if no resistance is made, but am I to leave Lang's Nek in Natal territory in Boer occupation and our garrisons isolated and short of provisions, or occupy former and relieve latter?

The same day Lord Kimberley replied:

> It will be essential that garrisons should be free to provision themselves and peaceful intercourse with them allowed, but we do not mean that you should march to the relief of garrisons, or occupy Lang's Nek if arrangement proceeds. Fix reasonable time within which answer must be sent by Boers.

On February 20, no telegrams of importance upon negotiations appear to have passed between London and Newcastle.

Meantime Sir Evelyn Wood, on the 19th, made a reconnaissance with cavalry in the direction of

Wakkerstroom; was absent thirty hours; swam the Buffalo twice and covered more than sixty miles of ground, but saw no sign of Boers; on the 21st he left Newcastle for Maritzburg, to superintend the organisation and movement of the second column now landing at Durban.

We have now reached an important day among the few yet remaining in our record. Here were the reinforcements, strong fighting material, bronzed with the sun and service of Indian frontier war, keen to be led against the enemy, and indignant at the bare rumour of negotiation or suspension of hostilities. There, a few miles distant, were the Boers, entrenched on the soil of Natal, barring the road that led to the garrisons they had surrounded and besieged two months ago. On the morning of the 21st Colley inspected the reinforcements, and after telling them what an honour he felt it to have the command of such a fine body of men, he paid a compliment also to the troops who had already fought under him. 'You must remember,' he is reported to have said, 'that your comrade soldiers who are now at the front have upheld the name of British soldiers.'

The letters that he wrote on this February 21 bear evidence of the conflicting considerations before him, and the grave thought with which he weighed them. Writing to the Secretary of State on this day, he further develops his objections against a settlement with the Boers on the lines suggested by the Colonial Office. After explaining in some detail the difficulties presented by any division of the Transvaal, he adds, 'Even our total withdrawal from the Transvaal would be preferable;' and later events point to the fact that

the Colonial Office ultimately came round to this view. In this letter, too, we see that the past with its failures was ever present to him. 'I cannot but perceive,' he writes, 'that my failure at Lang's Nek has added considerably—I regret to say it—to your lordship's difficulties in effecting a settlement, and that a course which might have been safe had I been successful, may now be full of danger.' [8]

Great as was the difference of mind between the Colonial Office and the Governor with regard to the future settlement of the Transvaal, it must have been still greater upon the military question. A letter on this same day to Sir Garnet Wolseley reiterates this difference:

> I am now getting together a force with which I think I could command success, but the Home Government seem so anxious to terminate the contest, that I am daily expecting to find ourselves negotiating with the 'Triumvirate' as the acknowledged rulers of a victorious people; in which case my failure at Lang's Nek will have inflicted a deep and permanent injury on the British name and power in South Africa which it is not pleasant to contemplate.[9]

It was in this frame of mind that he had now to deal with the proposal of Mr. Kruger, which, as we have seen, was received on the 13th, but upon which final instructions had only reached him on the night of the 19th or early on the 20th. Lord Kimberley had telegraphed the general lines upon which the Government was ready to accept that proposal, and Colley was himself to 'fix a reasonable time within which an answer must be sent by the Boers.' He now wrote to Mr. Kruger as follows:

[8] February 21, 1881, to Lord Kimberley.
[9] Newcastle, February 21, 1881.

Army Headquarters, Newcastle : February 21, 1881.

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th instant.

In reply I am to inform you that on the Boers now in arms against Her Majesty's authority ceasing armed opposition, Her Majesty's Government will be ready to appoint a Commission with large powers who may develop the scheme referred to in Lord Kimberley's telegram of the 8th inst. communicated to you through his Honour, President Brand.

I am to add that upon this proposal being accepted within forty-eight hours, I have authority to agree to a suspension of hostilities on our part.

I have the honour, &c.

G. POMEROY-COLLEY,
Major-General Commanding Forces.

P. KRUGER, Esq.

The history of this letter will be followed in the next chapter. Later on that day I find him writing as under to Lady Colley at Maritzburg :

Sir Evelyn is just about to start down country again and I up country. I don't know if I shall have another fight this time, but at any rate I have a good fighting column and, what I care most for, a fair cavalry force.

I suppose I shall vibrate between this and Mount Prospect for some time, until our forces are more concentrated. I am not inclined to make another move until I have cavalry enough to make it decisive. Whether another move will ever be made, indeed, seems to me questionable, for the Government seem so anxious to come to terms that I expect to hear of their giving in to everything the Boers demand.

The regiments now here are certainly splendid ones, but they won't fight more gallantly than my young soldiers did at the Nek and at the Ingogo.[1]

In these few words we get, I think, an exact

[1] Newcastle, February 21, 1881.

picture of Colley's mind at the moment he was about to start on his road back to Mount Prospect. He has no fixed plan for immediate operations; he is doubtful whether another move will ever be possible. At any moment he may expect to hear that the Home Government have settled with the Boers. He had read, while in Newcastle, the criticisms in the Natal newspapers on the Ingogo fight, and they seem to have drawn from him almost the first bitter words he had allowed himself to use.

> The Natal papers, with their usual delight in vilifying everything English, and every one in authority, pronounce it [the fight near the Ingogo] a defeat. I wonder what they would have called it if the sides had been reversed, and after six hours' steady fighting with heavy losses I had had to report that I had made no impression on the position, and had given up the attack and drawn off my troops. Defeat would not have been a half strong enough word then. Anyhow the Boers, though they talked very big of attacking our reinforcements, &c., have thought better of any further attacks of the kind, and our communications have practically been open, and I able to come in here at pleasure and directly exercise my command ever since, instead of being in the position of Pearson at Eckowe, or a subject for prayers in churches like Roberts at Kabul. The moral effect of such a position would have been disastrous throughout the country. . . .
>
> I am very glad to have Evelyn here, and am quite sure he will work right well with me, and it is a great comfort to know there is some one on the spot to take up the reins in case of accident, which after my experience of the last day's fighting is decidedly a contingency to be considered.[2]

The newspapers and his critics could see plainly enough what he had not done. They could measure the failure to take the Nek, and criticise what followed

[2] Newcastle, February 21, 1881, to Sir Garnet Wolseley.

at Ingogo. But they forgot to take account either of the necessity of the risk he had faced, of the many odds that were against him, or of the heroic manner in which, when these odds had proved too many for him, he had still known how to carve out of misfortune itself fresh footholds for his resolution. Every one knew the impossible that had not been done, but few could realise all that had been done, or see how different the situation might have been had a less firm hand been on the helm. True, he had been checked at Lang's Nek, and had lost many men at the Ingogo, but in no respect had honour of arms suffered, or ground been lost, or tactical position forfeited. If the Boers held him in check at Lang's Nek, his position in their front held them there too. Natal, in rear of that narrow angle between the Drakensberg and the Buffalo, was in complete tranquillity. He had throughout these anxious weeks been able to exercise his command to every purpose in Natal, and had corresponded as freely with the Home Government as though he had never quitted Maritzburg. And, still more important than all else, his action had drawn off from the beleaguered garrisons the extreme force of the Boer fighting element, and kept it concentrated at Lang's Nek for defence and not offence. All this he had done with a mere handful of men, in the face of defeat and difficulty the measure of which he alone could understand.

He had accepted the responsibility of every failure. Now, as he looked back on the record of the past two months, it may well have seemed—and justly seemed—that in their haste to show where he had failed, his critics were blind to all he had dared, and done, and

prevented. Through a long series of extraordinary and discouraging events, he had, as it were, outmarched the forces of his ill-fortune, and had now reached a point whence the promising perspective of success could be seen opening before him.

Amongst the letters written by Lady Colley from Maritzburg to her husband at the front, I find passages which are not without interest in the reflected picture they give of the changing phases of war and prospects of peace, at the moment. Colley had written after Lang's Nek that he had now taken the field force under his personal command, 'appointing no one in Deane's place.' To this his wife replied on February 15:

. . . Though 'commanding the attack' need not, I am sure, imply anything like what Colonel Deane did, still I have little doubt that it does imply your being in a good deal of danger, and I wonder I don't want to argue against it; but I do not—I do not feel it would be possible for me to stir a finger to keep you from doing anything you think it right as a soldier to do; and as the finger would certainly be quite *in*efficacious, perhaps it is just as well!

Later, on the 24th, when the cipher messages about negotiations were passing fast over the wires, I find the following comment:

. . How these horrid ciphers have been worrying you! I shouldn't much wonder if you shared my feelings soon, and we cleared out of this place and had our long-dreamt-of 'spree' at last. I know all I think of now is seeing your dear face again, and never as long as I live will I let myself care a rush for any such rubbish as work or success again. I have had a lesson I shall never unlearn; at least I am having it, and the final word will be mastered when the peace-at-any-price folk have gained their way in this matter. It is so nice to read your dear letters

and count, as now I am getting able to count, on having you back again before very long. . . .

Though I have been very angry and bitter at the 'peace party,' still *that* don't lower my spirits at all! And I can't help suspecting that down in uttermost recesses of my feelings into which I don't ever poke, the news of 'peace' at 'any price' would stir a joyous commotion—I should be furious, of course, and mortified, but you would be *safe*, and nothing in this world is worth anything to me in comparison with that.[3]

Continuing the letter to Sir Garnet Wolseley which he had begun at Newcastle, Colley added a sentence from Mount Prospect after his arrival on the 23rd, which will suffice to carry the narrative to that date and tell what had occurred in the interval.

I have just marched out to my old camp with a squadron of 15th Hussars, the 92nd Regiment, and a large convoy. I have now about six weeks' supplies of everything here, so am well off in that respect. The Boers are busy entrenching.

Things seemed to be brightening a little. He writes to his wife after reaching his old camp:

I have had telegrams a trifle more satisfactory from home. The scheme they keep talking of seems not to exist, but they are waiting for it to be evolved for them. My own impression is that the negotiations will break down on the question of guaranteeing the leaders against punishment for their rebellion. The leaders care chiefly for their own skins, and I doubt their agreeing to any terms which do not secure those, while I think the Home Government is hardly prepared to let them off scot free. However, I suppose I shall know now in a few days.[4]

'The Boers are busy entrenching.' That was the keynote to his mind at the moment. In all the letters

[3] From his wife. [4] February 23, 1881.

of the 23rd he speaks of this fact. 'The Boers have been busy further strengthening their position during my absence,' he wrote, 'and I see a good many fresh trenches and schantzes thrown up.' These trenches looked more formidable on the sky-line than they were found to be in reality later on. The Boers seemed to be busy at the spot where the first attack had been made, on either side of the Nek itself, and especially on the slopes of the Majuba. What would be the position if, carrying these entrenchments further to the right and left, they should establish themselves permanently on the Majuba summit?

There can be no doubt that in all these days since January 28, that taking of the Nek has been in his mind. There has not been a ravine, kloof, ridge, or contour of ground in that sweep of hills visible to the north and west from the camp at Mount Prospect which over and over again he has not watched and studied. He has spoken of many ways in which it might be effected, but there is one way he has never mentioned. Up aloft to the left front as one looked to the road where it crossed the Nek, a great table-topped hill towered above all other eminences in the landscape. It rose, as the innumerable table-mountains of South Africa rise, in steep and sometimes precipitous ascents from a broad base cumbered with the ruins which earthquake had flung down from above. The summit, 6,500 feet above the level of the sea, and about 2,500 feet higher than Mount Prospect, stood directly over the Boer position at Lang's Nek. The hill, in fact, was a gigantic bastion flanking the Boer lines, but so high and apparently so inaccessible for any body of troops that the Boers, with all their knowledge of ground, had not thought it necessary to do more than place

a picquet on the summit, which was withdrawn at sunset and re-established at sunrise next morning. Round the steep sides of this hill nearest to Mount Prospect, and about on a level with the crest of their position at Lang's Nek, they had extended their line of defence so as to enable them to command the road leading to the Nek on the west side, as the curve of the hills on the east side (where the attack of January 28 was made) commanded it in that direction. But the summit of the mountain had, as already said, no permanent occupation. A spectator standing at Mount Prospect, and facing Lang's Nek, had to his left front this imposing mountain, its flat top standing so clear against the sky that the outcrops of volcanic rocks which are so frequent in these singular hill-formations could be distinctly seen and counted; the natural schantzes or wall-like layers of perpendicular rock running round the mountain just below its crest and at other points further down, the thickets of wood and bush that grew on the narrow ledges between the steeper pitches of the mountain, could all be noted.

Westward from where the road into the Transvaal crossed Lang's Nek, the crest of foot-hills gradually ascended until it became merged into the mountain about halfway up. Thence to the flat summit the hill rose with the same abruptness that elsewhere characterised the last thousand feet of its ascent. The space at the top seemed to be about 300 yards in length, and at its south-western end the hill again dipped suddenly down at almost as steep an angle as had marked its rise. Following it downwards, another saddle was gained at perhaps a thousand feet higher than the lower ground whereon our

Masjidna Hill

From a sketch by Lady Butler

Jean Vickers Engraved

camp stood, and this saddle still curved further round towards south and west until it rose again to the loftier level of the Imquela Mountain. From Mount Prospect camp to the summit of the mountain would be a distance of less than four miles in a direct line, but following the lower part of the Imquela hill, thence climbing the saddle and scaling the steep face that rose above it, the route to the top would be quite six miles. What the width of the space at the top might be it was not possible to determine from Mount Prospect, neither could the angle of ascent on the further (or north and west) sides of the mountain be seen from that point. Native report, however, averred that these sides were almost as steep as those which could be seen, and it was also said that although the top, looked at from below, appeared to be nearly level, it was in reality depressed in the centre, that water could be easily found in this depression by digging only a few feet, and that the width taken across the top of the hill was not so great as the length of the axis visible from the camp. The jagged edges of trap outcrop already spoken of denoted clusters of volcanic rock at intervals on the summit. This singular mountain, the freak of some vast volcanic agency in remote geologic ages, was called the Spitz Kop by the Dutch settlers, and was known to the native inhabitants as the Amajuba.

This then was the situation. The Boers, daily strengthening the edges of Lang's Nek, had rendered a frontal attack on any part of that semicircle of hills more and more difficult. The Majuba Mountain still held no sign of the enemy, save the daily picquet of observation which was withdrawn at night. It stood directly above and partly in advance of the

Boer lines of defence, and was within easy cannon-shot or rocket distance of these lines, and of the camps and laagers behind them. If Colley meant to take the Nek, there, in the Majuba, seemed the way to do it. Undoubtedly the senior staff-officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart,[5] who had just joined the column, shared very strongly with his General the belief that the occupation of the Majuba by a *coup de main* under cover of night was a perfectly feasible operation—a daring and brilliant conception—a movement which once effected might result in the withdrawal of the Boers from Lang's Nek, and the consequent opening of the road into the Transvaal without further fighting.

[5] Afterwards Sir Herbert Stewart who commanded at Abu Klea in 1885 and died of wounds received there.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NIGHT MARCH

A further view of the Majuba—Colley's decision—Preparations and intentions—Composition of the column—Evening of February 26— The ascent of the mountain—The summit gained.

THERE was one side of the Majuba Mountain which Colley had not yet seen—that lying furthest from Mount Prospect. Any attempt to reconnoitre the hill from the Natal side would be sure to awaken the suspicions of the Boers, and would probably cause its permanent occupation by them; but by crossing the Buffalo River, and proceeding to a hill lying level with the Boer camp, beyond the river, the northern slopes of the Majuba would be visible, while it might easily seem to observers that the reconnaissance had for object the camps and laagers of the Dutch at the foot of the mountain, and the slopes of the position of Lang's Nek in the neighbourhood of the Buffalo. Accordingly, long before daybreak on the morning following his return from Newcastle, Colley and his staff left camp with an escort of cavalry, crossed the Buffalo some miles in rear of Mount Prospect, ascended the Transvaal shore of the river, and gained a lofty spot, abreast of the Boer position, from which the hitherto concealed slopes of the Majuba were visible. Long and atten-

tively Colley looked at these northern slopes, as a week earlier from the Imquela Mountain he had studied the western and south-western sides of the position. No one except his chief staff-officer, Colonel Herbert Stewart, imagined the real purpose of this reconnaissance across the Buffalo, and least of all did the Boers suspect it. All believed that it foreshadowed a movement against the east flank of the Boer position at the Nek, and no one dreamt that the great hill dominating the western end of the enemy's line was the real object aimed at.

February 25 and the forenoon of the 26th passed over without movement of importance on either side, beyond the march of one or two companies of infantry from camp, again in the direction of the Buffalo, and away from the Majuba. The afternoon of Saturday, February 26, came clear and fine. All the kloofs and crests of the Drakensberg showed distinctly to the naked eye, and as the sun drew towards the west, every indentation along the ridge of the Boer position could be seen, and the nearer slopes and summit of the Majuba searched, with the aid of field-glasses, to the fullest advantage, in the wonderfully clear and limpid atmosphere of the South African summer. Colley and his chief staff-officer spent some hours during this fine afternoon in following through their glasses every portion of the opposing heights. 'In fact, from the attention they paid it (the Majuba) that afternoon,' wrote Mr. Carter, who noticed them, 'one might have thought that they had never seen it before.' As the afternoon wore on, a Kaffir who lived on one of the neighbouring farms, and had a hundred times climbed every kloof and schantz in the surrounding hills, was seen in close conversation with

the General. It was noticed, too, that in the heat of some description about ground, this Kaffir lifted his hand and pointed to the Majuba Mountain, but the General quickly motioned the outstretched arm down. This native had ascended the hill the night before, and reported 'there was not a Boer posted there.' Equally important information he had brought still earlier when he declared that water was to be found, if not on the surface, immediately below it, in the saucer-shaped hollow that lay within the space at the top.

Very anxiously that hilltop was scanned by Colley and Stewart, as the evening shadows drew out longer to the east. From inside the canvas openings of their tents they watched through glasses for signs of Boer movements, when the hour came at which the picquets were usually withdrawn from the hill, and at length the scrutiny was rewarded by seeing the heads of men moving against the sky-line, and disappearing round a sharp conical pile of rocks which marked the south-western edge of the summit. The account given by the Kaffir of the previous night's experience was being repeated, and there was every reason to suppose that Majuba would be clear of Boer patrols and vedettes until sunrise on the morrow. It was this point that had chiefly absorbed Colley's attention since he had returned from Newcastle on the 23rd. The approach of the reinforcements must mean to the Boers that active operations were again becoming possible. Would they then continue to leave this commanding hill at his mercy, should he choose to occupy it? That was the consideration that had secretly influenced every military move on his part during several days.

Let us here review certain successive steps in the progress of this movement on Majuba. On February 4, General Colley, writing to Sir Evelyn Wood, who had not yet reached Natal, explicitly informs that officer that he, Colley, 'means to take the Nek himself.' Nothing could be attempted in that direction until the reinforcements had reached Newcastle, and therefore it was only on February 21 that any fixed and definite plan of attack became possible. On the 22nd, Colley returned to Mount Prospect from Newcastle, bringing with him, as we have seen, the best battalion under his command (the 92nd Gordon Highlanders), fifty Naval Brigade with two guns, and a squadron of Hussars. It will be remembered that the second battalion of the reinforcements, the 60th Rifles, was brought out from Newcastle as far as the Ingogo, and from that point was marched back again to Newcastle, there to remain until further orders.

Why not have brought the Rifle Battalion on to Mount Prospect, the reader will at once ask, and the answer is a simple one. That second battalion was not brought to Mount Prospect, because its presence there could scarcely have failed to put the Boers on the alert, to make them call in all their outlying forces, and to lead them to occupy the Majuba by night as well as by day; but bringing the Rifles halfway along the road and then sending them back to Newcastle would, on the contrary, make the Boers believe that no attack was for the present intended, and that, so far from meditating a forward movement, General Colley was still apprehensive about his communications in rear. Sir Evelyn Wood had gone back to Pietermaritzburg; half of the first batch of

reinforcements were still kept at Newcastle, eighteen or twenty miles distant from Lang's Nek; there was nothing to indicate that the English General had any intention of making a hostile or forward movement at the moment.

Another consideration in his mind was that of the proposed armistice with the Boers. In the telegrams already given as having passed between Sir George Colley and the Colonial Minister, it will be remembered that a proposition had been made by Lord Kimberley, and forwarded in a letter from Colley to Mr. Kruger on February 21, announcing the terms upon which the British Government were prepared to negotiate.

The subsequent military action taken by Colley has been criticised as conflicting in some way with the offer of negotiation, and it is therefore necessary to follow closely the history of this offer between February 21 and 26. According to Boer statements, the letter written at Newcastle on February 21 was received by General Smidt at Lang's Nek on Thursday the 24th. It seems probable that the letter had been brought from Newcastle by Colley himself, and sent in to the Boer lines on his arrival at Mount Prospect. At all events, it was received at Lang's Nek by the 24th at latest, for on that day General Smidt's acknowledgment of the letter reached Colley. The Boer leader added in his reply that he had despatched the letter to Mr. Kruger at Heidelberg, and told the messenger to drive his horse as hard as he could, but that the letter could not reach Mr. Kruger in less than two days, nor his answer come back in less than four.

On Saturday, February 26, an intimation appears

to have been made by the Boer leader to Colley's military secretary, Colonel Stewart, that, after all, Mr. Kruger was *not* at Heidelberg, but had been called away to Rustenberg, a place still more remote, and that consequently there must be a further delay in sending a reply to the letter of the 21st.

Now Colley's letter had proposed conditions the acceptance of which would lead to an armistice, and had fixed forty-eight hours as the period open for acceptance. This proposal, in answer to Mr. Kruger's letter *from* Lang's Nek, had been sent *to* Lang's Nek, four miles from Mount Prospect. Although the Boers might not unreasonably suppose that the term of forty-eight hours named for acceptance might be extended to meet the altered circumstances of distance now alleged by them, there was not, so far as I can discover, a word, hint, or action on the part of Sir George Colley to make them imagine that any suspension of hostilities had been even tacitly arrived at pending the receipt of Mr. Kruger's answer. On the contrary, there had been a hostile reconnaissance on the 24th; cannon had been fired on that day from Mount Prospect against their extreme left outpost beyond the Buffalo. Again, on the 25th there had been a movement towards the drift on the right rear of Mount Prospect; and again on the morning of the 26th there had been another movement in the same direction and across the Buffalo, which resulted in a good deal of rifle fire on the part of our troops, though without any loss to the enemy. During these days, too, the Boers extended their own entrenchments. Clearly there could not with any reason have existed in the minds of the Boer leaders at Lang's Nek an idea that active operations had for the moment lapsed.

It is possible that General Colley, actuated by a desire to avoid even the semblance of a misconception, might not have chosen to exercise fully his belligerent rights during the forty-eight hours named for the acceptance of his proposals. But it cannot be supposed that he was bound to allow further delays, however unavoidable, to affect his action beyond that time. Mr. Kruger, said the Boers, had returned to Heidelberg, and had gone on to Rustenberg. What if the Boer President went still further away? Meantime our garrisons remained unrelieved.

As to the situation between Colley and the Home Government, the Colonial Office telegram of February 19 did not limit his military action beyond denying him to march to the relief of the garrisons or to occupy Lang's Nek if the arrangement proceeded. But suppose that it did not proceed—was he to be debarred in the interval before reply to his proposal was received from making any movement or taking up any position within the territory of Natal, which might strengthen his own line or render that of the Boers less tenable?

So far as I have been able to read his mind at this time, he would gladly have accepted compromise or arrangement with the Boers, as putting an end to a conflict which was hateful to him, provided only that the honour of the British arms were assured, and that the force under his command stood on Lang's Nek and not in front of it. But however distasteful might be the proposed negotiations, while yet the army he commanded lay in the shadow of the valley of defeat, and the Boers stood triumphant on the ridge of victory above, he was not the man to deviate a hair's breadth from the course which duty towards

his enemy demanded of him by the rules of honourable warfare.

In the balance of his mind at the moment there was, over and above the natural soldier-like desire to take the Nek or press the Boers to relinquish it before any words of negotiation could be spoken, a strong conviction of the permanent national disadvantage of any other course. But that Colley, no matter how strong might be his desire, national and personal, to put possession of Lang's Nek first, and negotiation second, in the order of events, would have deviated from the strict interpretation of honourable military practice in his dealings with the enemy is a supposition as unworthy of him and of his whole career as it is untrue to the actual facts before us. Much as he valued the honour of his country's arms, deeply as he loved his profession, his mind was too well schooled in all that was best and noblest in its history, ever to permit him to risk his honour as a man for his success as a soldier.

When night fell on Saturday, February 26, more than forty-eight hours had passed since Colley had received Commandant Smidt's acknowledgment of the letter written at Newcastle on the 21st. No intimation of Boer acceptance of the proposal had arrived, and by the rules of war and of honour he was free to move.

Only three persons in the camp at Mount Prospect knew anything of the adventurous movement so soon to begin—the General in whose mind it had been conceived, Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart, who seems to have been told of it some days earlier, and Major Fraser, of the Royal Engineers, who, like Stewart, had joined the staff at Newcastle, and was now doing

duty as Assistant Quartermaster-General and head of the Intelligence Department. This officer was made acquainted with the outline of the scheme only on his return from the reconnaissance to the Buffalo at about 3 o'clock that same afternoon. It has been generally said that this movement on the Majuba was the result of a sudden inspiration, a decision arrived at and executed almost simultaneously, and many questions apparently perplexing have been disposed of by the hypothesis of action taken on the spur of the moment, and therefore prohibitive of deliberate calculation or adequate provision against those many contingencies which war, prolific in the unexpected, so frequently produces. Nothing is further from the truth than this supposition, that the movement on Majuba had not been fully considered. Every contingency had been provided for; every step in the ascent, every detail of the position had been thought out. The considerations which finally decided the exact date are given in Colonel Stewart's report of the action:

> Some days previous to the above-mentioned date [February 27] Sir George Colley informed me that he proposed to endeavour to seize and occupy Majuba Hill, upon which the right of the Boer position rested. It was not, I believe, in the first instance the General's intention to have endeavoured to obtain possession of the hill until considerable reinforcements had reached him, but upon his return to Mount Prospect from Newcastle, the rapid strides that had been made by the Boers in throwing up entrenchments on the right flank of their position, and the continuance of these works in the same direction upon the lower slopes of the Majuba Hill during the days subsequent to his return, induced him to believe that if the hill was to be seized before it was occupied, and probably fortified, by the Boers, it must be done at once.

I would here mention that the most careful study of the hill, so far as it could be observed from neighbouring heights, had been made by the General on several occasions. The distance of the hill from the road and the extent of its table-topped crest had been estimated, whilst a cavalry reconnaissance was carried out upon February 24 to a height on the left bank of the Buffalo River, with the object both of distracting the attention of the Boers from their right flank, and also more especially with a view to observe the eastern face of the hill. From his previous knowledge of the country the General was aware that the character of the hill was somewhat similar on all sides, and full inquiries had been made by him as to the northern slopes.

The hill was always held by a Boer picquet during the day, and the movements of this picquet had been carefully watched, and their departure from their post and disappearance from the southern slopes towards the evening had been noted for some days. Upon the evening of the 26th this picquet was seen to leave in the direction that the General had been informed led to the path by which the easiest ascent or descent of the hill could be made.

There remains no written document to show what were the exact intentions of the English General after the occupation of the Majuba had been effected. We can only follow the sequence of plan and event through the bold attempt and the semblance of achievement, till we reach the blank where Death blots out the record. Still, the scope and purpose of the movement can be partly discerned in the light of the orders issued to the troops. The men were to take three days' full rations, an amount of food which with careful distribution could, if necessity demanded it, be made to sustain the garrison on the mountain for twice that period. Seventy rounds of ammunition were to be carried by each soldier, and an additional supply was to be sent later in the night to the foot of

the mountain, where the abrupt ascent began, and where a small post was to be established to hold the line of communications. This extra ammunition could be carried from the advance post to the summit as circumstances might require. Entrenching tools were to be taken, consisting of six picks and four shovels per company, and every man carried his great-coat and a waterproof sheet.

Turning from the equipment of the force to its composition and proposed distribution, we can equally infer what was the intention of the General after he had gained the summit. The entire force detailed for the night march consisted of seven companies of infantry and a detachment of the Naval Brigade, numbering in all 554 rifles. The companies were divided as follows: Three of the 92nd Highlanders (180 men); two of the 60th Rifles (140 men); two 58th Regiment (170 men); Naval Brigade (64 men). An eighth company, of Rifles, was to leave camp after midnight and escort the reserve ammunition which was to be brought to the post at the foot of the Majuba. Two of the original seven companies were to be left 3,000 yards from camp on the ridge of the Imquela Mountain, and a third company was to be similarly dropped at a point 2,200 yards further along the track and about half that distance from the foot of the Majuba, leaving four for the summit of the mountain. Thus there would be a chain of posts connecting the mountain with the camp, and as the route to be followed formed almost two sides of a square of about equal length, until the steep ascent to the Majuba summit began, field artillery, pushed forward from the camp 1,500 yards directly towards the mountain, would cover most of the route through-

out its distance; while rifle fire from the Imquela Mountain on the south and the Majuba on the north would go far to protect the whole of the ground around the advanced post near the base of the latter hill.

These arrangements, all very carefully considered, point to the following intentions: to seize the crest of the Majuba Mountain under cover of darkness; to entrench some portion of the ground on the summit, and to remain there for at least three days; to keep open with two entrenched posts, and by the fire of artillery from the near neighbourhood of Mount Prospect, the line of approach to the mountain. Meanwhile, before the three days had expired, the extra battalion of the Rifles, the infantry battalion due to arrive at Newcastle on the morrow, and the three squadrons of Hussars still at Newcastle, could be brought up from that place and used, together with the troops still at Mount Prospect, either in a direct attack upon the front of Lang's Nek or in an attack upon that position from Majuba itself. Unless, indeed the occupation of Majuba led to the withdrawal of the Boers from Lang's Nek and the peaceful conclusion of negotiations.

So far the plan. The necessarily doubtful element lay in the question of what the Boers would do supposing the mountain top once occupied by our troops. Would they attack the camp at Mount Prospect, attack the line of communication between the camp and Majuba, or attack that mountain itself? The camp at Mount Prospect was now covered by several strong forts mounting many guns; the line of communication could be protected, as we have already seen, by a cross fire of rifles and

artillery. The Majuba crest once occupied by resolute troops might well seem as impregnable a position as any spot on earth could be—towering aloft over all surrounding hills, a depression in the ground at top to hide men occupying it from sight or fire, the rim around this saucer bare to the sweep of bullets from the centre, the sides so scarped and steep that nearly the whole circumference of the summit was inaccessible. With such a position it might well be thought that the danger of the enterprise could only lie in the night march, and that once the troops had gained that dominating summit they might rest in absolute security of possession.

At half-past six Colley and his little staff sat down to dinner. Those who were with him describe his manner as being perfectly cheerful; his conversation easy; no sign of pre-occupation or anxiety of mind about him. The orders for the march had not yet been issued. The camp had been unusually bright and pleasant that afternoon. The day was fine; the band had played. All the depression consequent upon the defeats of three and four weeks earlier had disappeared. But the General, despite his quiet cheerful manner, had many a troubled thought that evening. There can be little doubt in the minds of those who have read his intimate letters that for some weeks the old idea of good fortune, the buoyant conviction that luck—as it is called—was with him, was distinctly on the wane. Frequently in his letters there comes a stray sentence which shows the presence in his mind of some feeling that a turn had come in that career whose long-continued success he had so often acknowledged. And latterly there had come into his mind a kind of vague impression that even

the officers most closely associated with him in this enterprise shared, as it were, the shadow of his altered fortune. Not in the smallest degree did these thoughts ever influence the course of his action or make him deviate a hair's breadth from the line of policy his judgment deemed to be right in the interests of the State he served. The action I can trace to them is, indeed, a more absolute renunciation of self; a more active thoughtfulness for the needs and feelings of others. It seemed that as this idea or presentiment of unpropitious fate grew upon him, all the gentler and kinder instincts of the heart grew in proportion; and that as the frowns of adverse fortune deepened, and he set himself with more unflinching purpose to the course he had originally marked out, all the stronger became his appreciation of the labours of those around him, his desire to leave no services unacknowledged amid the pressure of work now imposed upon him. Only on the previous day, February 25, we find him referring to a letter of his to Sir Leicester Smyth, who had written contradicting a statement implying that he (Sir Leicester) had been the author of a criticism in a Cape journal upon Colley's strategy:

> I wrote him back a nice letter to the effect that under no circumstances could such an idea have entered my head, but that the name and reputation of 'Leicester Curzon' had been familiar to me from my earliest days of soldiering at the Cape, when Sir George Cathcart and his picked staff were so admired as typical English gentlemen. He was one of them, and I used often to hear his praises sung by the officers of the command. Considering what a man so much my senior might easily feel at being left idle with a few hundred men, while I am commanding a large force in the field, he has been wonderfully nice to me.[4]

[4] Mount Prospect, February 25, 1881, to his wife.

In the last sentence of the same letter there is an allusion to the peace negotiations. Referring to his letter of the 18th (see p. 338), as to the possibility of ultimately resigning his Colonial Office appointment, he says: 'I do not contemplate doing so unless either they ask me to carry out a future policy which I disapprove of, or I feel that making peace at this moment handicaps me too heavily to admit of my doing good service.'

Only one more letter will be quoted in this book. It was written to his wife apparently in the interval preceding the fall-in for the night march, probably about 8 o'clock on February 26, and was found on the top of the papers of his private despatch-box. It was the last he ever wrote. As it contains his sole comment on all that had happened and was about to happen, its insertion here has been allowed—notwithstanding its closely confidential character.

February 26, 1881.

I am going out to-night to try and seize the Majuba Hill, which commands the right of the Boer position, and leave this behind, in case I should not return, to tell you how very dearly I love you, and what a happiness you have been to me. Don't let all life be dark to you if I don't come back to you. It is a strange world of chances; one can only do what seems right to one in matters of morals, and do what seems best in matters of judgment, as a card-player calculates the chances, and the wrong card may turn up and everything turn out to be done for the worst instead of for the best. But if one sticks to this steadily I don't think one can go wrong in the long run, and, at any rate, we can do no more. Remember, darling one, that there are many who love you, and to whom you can still be a source of happiness or the reverse, and that one still has one's work to do in the world, even if it becomes very uphill work, and can still give pleasure or do good to many. Good night,

darling. . . . How I wish I could believe the stories of meeting again hereafter; but it is no use complaining because things are not as one might wish—one must only brace oneself to meet them as they are. Think of our happiness together, and our love—not a common love, I think—and let that be a source of comfort and light to your future life, my own much-loved one, and think lovingly and sadly, but not too sadly or hopelessly, of your affectionate husband,

G. P. C.

At a quarter before 8 P.M. orders were quietly sent round the camp directing the troops already named to fall in at 9.30 o'clock. The strictest vigilance was enjoined; no lights were to be used; the parade was to form up to the west side of the camp by the redoubt nearest to the road leading to Lang's Nek. Scarcely had this intimation of immediate movement been given when the usual night signal for 'lights out' was sounded, the tent lanterns were extinguished, and all was dark and silent throughout the camp.

To the Boer vedettes on the hills along Lang's Nek, who could easily hear the long-drawn signal of the bugles and mark the disappearance of the luminous tents which had glimmered like distant lanterns in the plain below, it must have seemed that another night of unbroken quiet was before them. The night, though fine and free from cloud, was dark. There was no moon. Above the outline of the mountains the stars shone brightly, but the hollow formed by this circle of higher ground, and the deep colour of the grass now in its summer luxuriance, caused the wide space around the camp to seem darker than the darkness of the night really warranted. No one among the force, except the three officers already named, had any idea of the real destination of the

movement. That, whatever its nature, the men were extremely eager to take part in it is very certain. 'In the lines of the several regiments which were to take part in this night march,' wrote a correspondent, 'there prevailed two sentiments. Those who were going were in high glee—those who were to remain behind were bemoaning their "hard lines." There was not a man in camp whose confidence in their chief had abated one jot.'

As Colley was leaving his tent to join the parade, he met Mr. Ritchie, the chaplain, of whose services on previous occasions he had often spoken. Shaking hands with the chaplain, he wished him good-bye, adding in an undertone a request that Lieutenant Bruce Hamilton, his A.D.C., should not be wakened. That officer had been obliged through illness to lie down in his tent on his return that afternoon from the reconnaissance, and knew nothing of the intended movement. He was now asleep. 'Take care there is no noise round young Hamilton's tent,' Colley whispered to the clergyman. 'I don't mean to take him to-night. There seems a kind of fatality about my staff. If anything were to happen to him, it would kill his sister.' That sister was the wife to whom he had just written the farewell letter above given.

Soon all was ready among the companies of the three battalions and the Naval Brigade drawn up to the west of the camp. Ammunition had been distributed, rations issued, water-bottles filled, men inspected; at 10 o'clock the word to move was given and the march began. Major Fraser with two Kaffir guides led the column; the 58th companies followed; then the 60th, then the 92nd. The detachment of sailors under Commander Romilly

brought up the rear. This composite formation has been much blamed. It has been widely said that it would have been better to have taken one complete battalion, the 92nd, in place of these four detachments. When a thing has failed, it is easy to find fault, and to say if so-and-so had not been done, the disaster would not have occurred. Many of the daring feats in our history have been accomplished by composite forces—forlorn hopes, sorties, stormings have been largely their work. When in the old wars of the latter part of the last century and the early part of the present one there was some action to be done of an exceptionally hazardous and daring nature, it was a battalion made up of the flank companies of many regiments that was usually selected for the service. It will be remembered that Colley had promised the 58th after Lang's Nek that they should have a place under his command when the time came for a final move against the Boer position; and whatever may be the value of the criticism evoked, this much is certain, that in taking with him on the night of February 26 detachments of the two battalions who had served under him in the previous actions, he kept his word to one of these battalions and declined to cast a slur upon the reputation of the other.

The road which led from Newcastle to the Nek was soon passed by the column, and then everybody guessed that the real object of the night's march must be the lofty hill-top which in the daylight had so long formed the most conspicuous object in the circle of vision, and which even in the uncertain light now prevailing could be distinguished as it rose in darker outline amid the stars. The course of the

column was not direct towards the mountain, but to a ridge lying considerably south of it. This ridge rose in a long slope to the west, culminating in a mountain called the Imquela, the summit of which was distant from that of Majuba about 4,000 yards. A point on the north shoulder of the Imquela was reached after an hour's stiff march, and here were left the two companies of the Rifles whose duty, as we have already said, was to cover the communications with the camp. Up to this point the path was well known, as the position selected for the two companies was that on which our vedettes had been daily posted, and was the spot at which five days earlier an insolent and ill-written paper had been found in the morning addressed by some Boer soldier to 'Mr. Cooley, Great Britian's Camp:'

Mr. Colley. February 21, 1881.

Sir,—We will be greatly oblige if you will send out your troops at once, as we are getting quite tired of laying here. We always understood that Great Britain is a powerful and pluckey natian, but now we see for ourselfs that they are not so.

Truly yours,

'DUTCHMAN.'

Outside it was endorsed 'Please forward this to Colley. You must please make haste. All the troops are starving in Pretoria.' At this same spot, too, one of our vedettes had been fired at and mortally wounded about the same time. From this place a Kaffir track turned off to the north at right angles to the path which had been previously followed. This track was only wide enough for one man or horse to use in single file, but it was fairly level,

having probably been scooped out of the very steep side of the Imquela Mountain in lapse of time by the passage of wild animals and Kaffirs. Above it the shoulder of the mountain rose at an angle of forty-five degrees, and below it the hill continued to descend in the same steep grade. Following this narrow path for about 1,000 yards, the col or saddle between the Imquela and the Majuba was gained, at a height of about 1,200 feet above that of Mount Prospect, and still about the same elevation below that of the top of Majuba. The saddle between the two hills was fair going, and the light better than in the lower ground. The formation of fours, instead of single file, could again be used, and for another half-hour the march was continued straight in the direction of Majuba.

It was about midnight when a halt was made, at the point rather more than midway between the two mountains, where it had been intended to post another company of infantry, in whose charge the horses of the officers were to be left, for from that place forward the track became too broken and too steep for animals to travel at night.

This temporary halt revealed the fact that the rear of the column had straggled in the darkness, lost connection with the front portion, and disappeared. One company of the 92nd and the whole of the Naval Brigade—about one-fourth of the force—were missing. Major Fraser was sent back with a Zulu to endeavour to find the missing tail. After searching for some time, the quick eye of the Zulu discovered two heads showing against the sky-line. There was a chance that they might be Boer scouts, for this part of the trail lay well within the limit of

the enemy's patrols. Fortunately, however, they proved to be our people. Nearly an hour had been lost by this mishap, and it was 1 o'clock before the company of the 92nd had been placed in the position it was to occupy, and orders given it to entrench and prepare cover for the horses and for the reserve ammunition, hospital requirements, and other supplies expected to arrive from Mount Prospect with the eighth company of infantry before daybreak. The bare mention of this loss of direction by the tail of the column, and the consequent delay in a movement the essence of which was time (for if daylight broke before the summit was gained the expedition could scarcely avoid failure), conveys but a faint idea of the significance of such an incident to the mind of the commander.

Some who were assisting in the expedition have left us, in diaries or letters, scant record of their experiences on that eventful night. We know that a keen north wind blew across the saddle between the mountains; that away to the right, down in the valley, the baying of dogs could be heard from O'Neill's farm, the solitary homestead that stood between the enemy's lines and the British camp. In the stillness of the valley some Boer patrol, as sharp of hearing as were their dogs, might detect the movement and enable the enemy to forestall the little column in the coveted possession of Majuba. The night march of troops bound upon some perilous enterprise is, of all operations possible in war, by far the most impressive. Darkness which has merged into a common void the features of the landscape has revealed the starry firmament and made it a colossal partner in the movement. We steer by

the stars as a ship at midnight amid the wastes of the ocean. Things that had no voices for us in the glare of the sun begin to speak audibly. The great constellations which have heretofore been only names to us become realities and agents in our lives. They are watchmen set on high to give mute warning of the passing of the night, and tell us the time is near, and the time that is near may be the end of that little span of moments we call our lives. These things make men silent even where silence is not a law, and as night has hidden the familiar objects of our everyday existence and opened up vast reaches of the heavens to us, it has called, too, out of its depths old landscapes of recollection—distant gleams of forgotten times, vague as the outline of the horizon where the stars and the mists are mixed together.

When Barac led his ten thousand men from the rugged defiles of Mount Tabor against the chariots and warriors of Sisera, and the oft-quoted verse tells that 'the stars in their order and courses fought against Sisera,' there can be little doubt that the march which caused the overthrow of the Canaanite enemy was made by the light of the constellations wheeling in slow circles over the plain of Esdraelon.

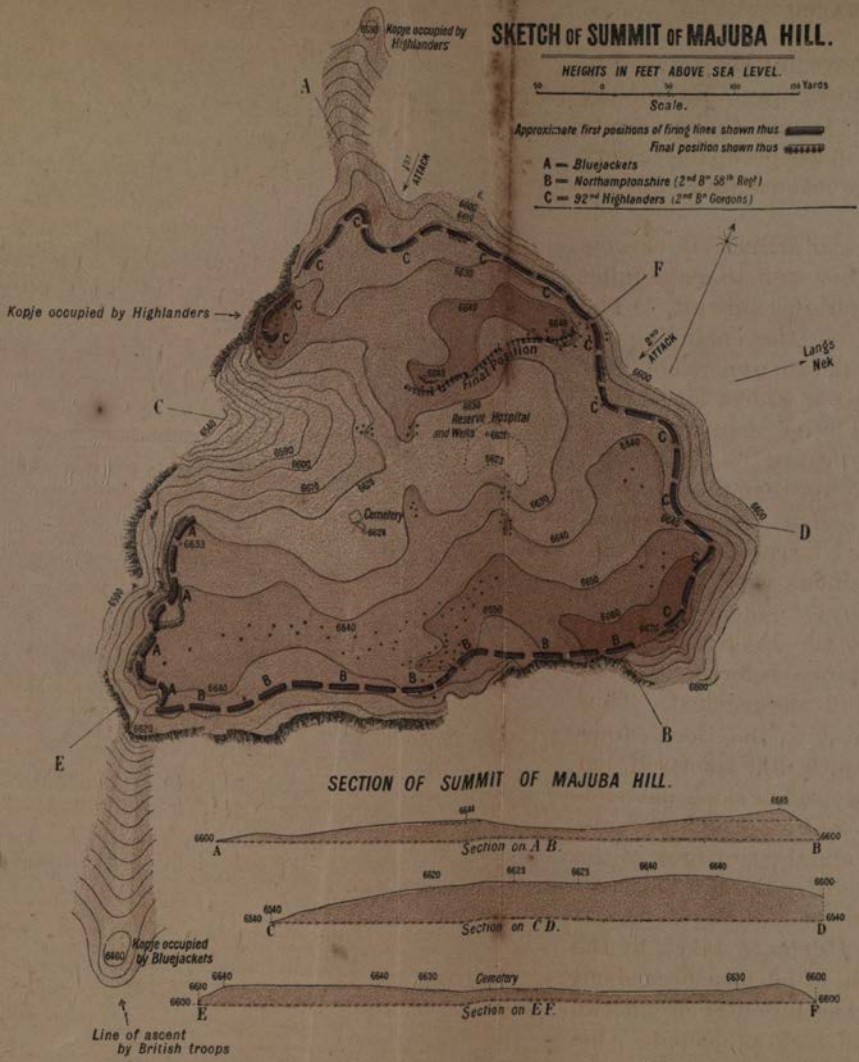
The missing party found, the march of the main column was again resumed, and the foot of the mountain was soon reached. From here a rough path led up the very steep side of the hill by its south-western flank. The track soon became entangled with clumps of thorny brushwood and strewn with rocks and boulders. The men, encumbered with their arms, ammunition, and other impedimenta, could make only very slow progress. At times the Kaffir guides lost the path. In the deep silence of the night the noise

made by the nailed shoes of the men and the strike of rifle or pickaxe against the rocks could be heard in the post beneath, where the company of Highlanders had been left. But no alarm occurred, and at about 3 o'clock the last spur immediately below the summit was gained by the leading files. From this point a smooth rise, steeper than anything yet encountered, led to the top. It was only about 200 feet, but hands had to be used to hold on by the tufts of grass that grew upon it. Beyond this glacis the rim of the summit could now be discerned through the darkness. This was the point at which the Boer picquet had been seen at sunset—seven hours earlier—leaving the mountain. It was the place, too, where the enemy would be if he was now in possession of the hill-top. The Kaffir guides, closely followed by the General, soon gained the brow. The dim prospect was no longer that of a hillside rising at a slope of one foot in three. It was into level dimness that the eye had now to seek its way. The top of the Majuba had been gained, and it was not yet 4 o'clock.

For fully an hour longer the straggling men kept slowly topping that last rim of the summit. The long and toilsome climb had broken the continuity of the little column, and the companies and corps had become intermixed. Colley had placed himself at the point where the final rise ended, in order to personally direct the men as they arrived in ones and twos upon the summit. He had sent his two staff-officers, Stewart and Fraser, down the hill some little distance, to help and guide the men over the last bad bits of the ascent. After they had lain down for a few moments the General urged them in

quiet word of command to move further forward to the positions they were meant to occupy. 'No bullying or driving ever came from Sir George Colley,' wrote one of the correspondents; 'and none was necessary on this occasion, as the men went readily to take up their posts.'

When all, or nearly all, had arrived, it became possible for the General and his staff to make fuller examination of the ground on the summit. The shallow depression dipping from the encircling rim occupied almost the entire mountain top. The floor of this depression was from 10 to 40 feet lower than the edge—viz., some 40 feet lower than the south edge of the mountain (that nearest to the British camp), and from 10 to 20 feet lower than the northern, or Boer, side. The rim of this hollow, which measured 900 yards round, was composed largely of rocky outcrop. It was nearly conterminous with the edge of the summit on its south and west sides, but at its northern side (that nearest to the Boers) the space at top sloped for some distance before the steep outer brow of the volcanic hill was reached. Thus the edge of the hollow nearest to the Boer camps was not the edge of the Majuba hill top itself, but on that side there was a grassy roll or slope, descending some 40 feet in a distance of from 50 to 100 yards, between the rim of the basin and the true brow of the mountain. As the inner edge of rocks did not command the steep outer drop of the mountain side, it was necessary to make the line of defence taken by the soldiers follow the outer circuit, which measured about 1,200 yards in perimeter. From this outer circuit two or three steep isolated spurs of rock projected. One abrupt rocky eminence, or koppie, stood at the north-


SKETCH OF SUMMIT OF MAJUBA HILL.
HEIGHTS IN FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL.
Scale.
Approximate first positions of firing lines shown thus
Final position shown thus
A — Bluejackets
B — Northamptonshire (2nd 58th Regt)
C — 92nd Highlanders (2nd Bn Gordons)
Kopje occupied by Highlanders
1st ATTACK
2nd ATTACK
Final Position
Reserve Hospital and Wells
Cemetery
Langs Nek
SECTION OF SUMMIT OF MAJUBA HILL.
Section on A B.
Section on C D.
Section on E F.
Kopje occupied by Bluejackets
Line of ascent by British troops

The position of the troops marked on this Map is not intended to show the actual ground held by them, but only to indicate generally the faces of the mountain held by the different regiments.

western angle of the summit, and another on the western face. On the inner rim also small eminences arose, forming the highest points of the summit—from 6,500 to 7,000 feet above sea level. Below the brow the hill plunged down so abruptly that a considerable part of the lower mountain was invisible to men at top. But these more distant features were all hidden for the moment, and nothing was visible from the edge of the hill-top save a few lights dotting here and there the dark void below.

All at once those who were looking over the edge of the mountain saw a strange sight. The whole of the Boer laagers, extending from a point in the valley directly below the north face of the mountain to the point where the attack of January 28 had been made, became suddenly a mass of light. 'The Boer army,' wrote an onlooker, 'had risen from sleep, and in every tent and waggon there was a light. The valley, into which it seemed we could throw a stone from where we stood, was a mass of light. It was a thrilling sight from our point of vantage. There was our enemy at our mercy, and unaware of our proximity.' A wonderful sight indeed it was, and had these laagers been nearer to the men who looked down upon them from the cold summit of the Majuba a still deeper wonder might have struck the beholders. From all these separate camps arose the voices of men engaged in prayer. It was the Sabbath morning.

CHAPTER XVII

AMAJUBA

Organisation of the defence—Natural strength of position—Colley's intentions—Commander Romilly—The koppies—A Boer volley—The rally at the rocks—The end.

When day began to break, the aspect of the hill on which they stood, and the positions of the Boers beneath, unfolding from the obscurity of night, became revealed to the men on the Majuba. The Boer laagers behind the ridge of Lang's Nek, and the Nek itself lay immediately below the mountain. Every detail of the position, every tent, waggon, and earthwork, stood in view. 'Looking down from our position,' wrote the correspondent already quoted, 'into the enemy's lines, we seemed to hold them in the palm of our hands.' But if the position attained by the night march was strong in an offensive sense, it was, in the opinion of its occupants, ten times stronger for defence. So fully did this belief impress itself upon the force, that the men, carried away by the feeling of security, forgot orders, custom, and prudence, and began to show themselves openly on the sky-line. 'When I went to have a look at the Nek from the northmost limit of the hill,' wrote the correspondent already quoted, 'there were at least twenty Highlanders standing up boldly on the ridge, exposed to the full view of the Boers on the Nek below us. This was about 5 o'clock. From other incidents recorded,

it is easy to see that the troops, confident in the dominating strength of their position, were more anxious to invite attack than to conceal the fact of their possession of such a vantage-point. 'The Highlanders stood watching, and, pointing at the camp below them, shook their fists in exultation, and laughingly challenged the enemy: "Come up here, you beggars."'[1]

Meanwhile, as soon as there was sufficient light to show the ground, General Colley organised the defence as follows. 'Taken generally,' wrote Colonel Herbert Stewart,

> The men were extended along the outer crest of the table-top of the hill, a large proportion being kept in reserve, whilst the main strength of this line of defence was devoted to the eastern and northern faces, much of the other two faces being, in the General's opinion, practically unassailable. At daylight I accompanied the General around the hill, and he selected three points upon which to establish small square redoubts, to be occupied respectively by the companies of the 58th Regiment, 92nd Highlanders, and Naval Brigade. Two of these forts were to be erected on the southern side of the hill-top, such positions being suitable to the defence of the hill, and adding also to the protection of the line of communication. The General decided that he would not at once commence their construction, considering that the men might be fatigued by a march which, although short, was nevertheless severe, owing to the nature of a great portion of the ground.

Between dawn and sunrise, the dispositions above described were carried out, and, when completed, the position on the summit was as follows. The northern side of the Majuba, facing the Boer camps, was held by the 92nd Highlanders, whose line extended from

[1] Mr. Carter.

the abrupt rocky eminence or koppie near the north-western corner of the hill, along its northern face to another of these elevations overlooking the ridge of Lang's Nek on the north-east of the mountain, a total distance of from four to five hundred yards. In this interval, however, there were only a few places at which access to the mountain-top could be gained from below. Continuing the line of defence from the point overlooking Lang's Nek, the southern brow of the mountain nearest to Mount Prospect was held by the 58th Regiment for a distance of some three hundred and fifty yards; this brought the circle to the spot at which our troops had gained the summit at the end of the night march. From this point to where the 92nd line began, a distance of about two hundred and fifty yards along the western face was held by the Naval Brigade. The isolated peaks on the west and north sides held small detachments. On the north side of the central basin, three companies of the column remained in reserve. At this central point, too, the hospital was established, wells were sunk, and a good supply of water was found close below the surface. Taking the entire summit of the Majuba, both within and without the line of rock which marked the northern rim of the basin, a space of about ten acres was held by the English troops. Such was the summit of the Majuba—a position deemed impregnable by its defenders, when daylight enabled them to examine its features. That like all positions it had certain weak points, notwithstanding its apparent strength, subsequent events too surely showed. These weak points—if indeed their inequality of strength merits that word—have since been much exaggerated, but it is doubtful if the real causes of failure on one side,

and of success on the other, will ever be fully understood—or, if understood, admitted.

The sun rose at about a quarter before six that morning, and a very brilliant sunrise it was. The great grass-covered uplands, the long succession of distant table-topped mountains extending far into Zululand, the deep gorges through which the dividing torrent of the Buffalo wound its unseen way—all lay spread below in a panorama where the absence of town, hamlet, or homestead, served to emphasise the strange fact which the presence of two hostile camps at the base of the mountain marked—namely, that all this untenanted wilderness, and the enormous wastes that lay removed from sight around it, were not wide enough for the separate dwellings of a few thousand descendants of two kindred European nations. If, to any among the four hundred men on the mountain, such thoughts came when the sun revealed the landscape, they must have been of short duration, for it was about this time that the Boers below first caught sight of their enemies above; and so extraordinary was the change which immediately took place, that its development must have centred upon it every thought and interest of the beholders. So far the Boers, as Joubert afterwards admitted, knew nothing of our movements. The General was anxious this ignorance should be prolonged. He wished that the enemy should be given no provocation to attack, and seeing some men about to fire shortly after daylight, he stopped them. A little later, however, a shot was fired without orders, at a patrol of Boers passing below, and about the same time the party of Highlanders already mentioned were visible to the Boers. The alarm was thus given; the command 'to saddle'

ran quickly through the Boer camp, and in an incredibly short time the plain beneath was dotted with horsemen. The oxen were quickly driven in and waggons were inspanned. From our point of view it seemed as if consternation had seized the enemy, and they were preparing to evacuate their ground. Out of the apparent confusion of the camps below, bodies of mounted men began to move quickly towards the lower spurs of the mountain, still well out of rifle range. Looking down at this scene, it appeared doubtful to our officers whether the forward movement of the men who drew in towards the foot-hills was more than a screen behind which the work of retirement would be carried out. It has since transpired that in a rapid council of war, held when the occupation of the Majuba was first observed, an abandonment of the Boer position had been spoken of. To this proposal there was vehement opposition. Those who had fought in the previous actions volunteered to assault the mountain. It was accordingly agreed that covering parties should invest the Majuba on three sides, and maintain a long-range fire upon the summit from points of the lower eminences whence the mountain-top could be seen. At the same time patrols were despatched down the Buffalo Valley to examine the road to Newcastle and ascertain whether there was any movement of troops from that place upon Mount Prospect. When these patrols returned it would be time to determine whether the assault on the mountain-top should be delivered.

In the official narratives afterwards published there is no indication that at this time, or for many hours later, any misgiving was felt on the summit as to the result of an assault. Neither men nor officers seem

to have believed in an attack being made. What were the thoughts of the General himself we can never know. If he shared the confidence around him, he had reason to do so. He could estimate the strength of the position, and he saw that it was the point from which the Boers could be subsequently forced to relinquish the stern hold they had taken of Lang's Nek. 'We could stay here for ever,' is the remark he is said to have made to his chief staff officer, Colonel Herbert Stewart, when daylight had sufficiently broken to permit the configuration of the ground to be realised.

This universal belief is largely responsible for (what now appears to have been) omission to entrench the position the night march had given our troops. Nature had already entrenched it with lavish hand. She had built a fortress, stronger a thousand times than all the defences the military engineer could erect. The subterranean fires, the long erosions, the vast smeltings and castings of prehistoric ages had upreared this mighty mass, had scarped its sides and smoothed its summit, had strewn around its base enormous boulders. The men who had climbed in the night the easiest line of final ascent could judge what the difficulty would be to a foe who should attempt to scale the hill-top at the few other spots where alone it could be climbed at all. It was this vast natural strength of the position which gave weight to the decision, apparently arrived at in the early morning, not to begin at once the construction of works, on rocky soil, at certain points commanding the summit. Another reason, that of the fatigue of the troops after their labours in the night march, is stated in some of the official documents to have been a chief cause of this

delay;[2] but any force which that reason may have carried at the time sprang undoubtedly from the accepted security already supplied by Nature—which seemed to render additional precautions a perfunctory labour unnecessary to impose on tired men. Whatever may have been the General's intentions as to setting the men to work upon the construction of the three redoubts which he proposed to establish for the protection of the summit during the night, it is certain that the men extended in the front line along the edge of the table-top were directed to put up at once individual cover of stones and turf to shelter their positions from fire.

Describing a look round the summit at about 6 or 6.30, when some of the Boers were already filing out from their laagers and approaching the base of the mountain, Mr. Carter thus mentions these shelters:

Immediately within our own line of defence the men were putting up cover—but such cover! Each man cast about for a few loose stones, made a breastwork for himself

[2] In endeavouring to account for the defeat at Majuba it has also been said that the General was himself much fatigued by the night march. His physical strength and extremely active habits would, in themselves, make this suggestion most improbable, but it was always strongly denied by Sir Herbert Stewart, and is disproved by other evidence. Nor were the men unduly strained by the ascent. Colonel Herbert Stewart writes under date May 12, 1881: 'I need scarcely say that I utterly disagree with the view of the men being exhausted . . .' and again: 'The march was not rapid nor over-severe. Sir George was not a bit tired.' Colonel (now Sir Charles) Mitchell, then Colonial Secretary of Natal, writes in April 1881: 'I started early in the morning for Lang's Nek and Amajuba, going over the whole position thoroughly. Lang's Nek must have been as near a success as possible, and as for Amajuba, I can only share every one's opinion (except X. and Y.'s) that it is as impregnable a position as could well be found, and it is incredible that over three hundred British infantry could have been driven off it like a flock of sheep by half their number of Boers. I saw Stewart on my way through Prospect. . . . He says Sir George was *as fresh and bright as possible and showed no signs of weariness.*'

on the ridge by piling them loosely on the top of each other, to a height sufficient to cover the head of the man who was going to trust to that for shelter, and of a width of, say, two feet. Anything more trumpery and miserable as a protection against a bullet could not be conceived. . . . I remarked to several, 'What's the use of that? The splash between these stones will be worse for you than the bullet coming without obstruction.' 'Oh, it's all right, sir; it's good enough for what we shall want up here,' was the nature of every reply I got.

This sense of security was the real explanation of the non-entrenchment, the explanation given before events had proved it fallacious; the other reasons are all given subsequent to the knowledge that it was fallacious.

It was not until about 7 o'clock that anything like steady firing took place on either side. The Boers had by this time got up the foot-hills sufficiently to be within range of the top, and from many detached points they kept up a fire which varied in intensity. No effect whatever was produced by this fire from below; the bullets flew harmlessly over the mountain, or, falling short, flattened themselves against the steep walls of rock below the first dip of the descent; occasionally a better aimed missile, striking the very edge of the rim, ricocheted into the hollow in the centre of the summit, but this was a rare occurrence, and the security of the position may be judged by the fact that in three hours of this fusillade not one man on the hill-top had been hit. That this constant whizzing of bullets over the hill had other use for the Boers, in keeping the troops in the firing line still in the unrested condition in which the night march had left them, was no doubt true. Sound has much to say to what is called the moral effect of fire. Our men replied steadily to the

much more rapid discharges of the enemy. By 10.30 they had eaten some of their three days' rations; most of those forming the reserve were lying asleep on the sheltered side of the basin behind the outcrop of rocks; the sun now shone brightly, and the high altitude to which they had climbed no longer caused the troops to feel cold and uncomfortable.

There is in existence very little record written at the time dealing with these early hours on Majuba, but that little is of extreme interest. As soon as signalling operations between the mountain and the camp at Mount Prospect became possible, a telegram had been despatched *via* the camp to the Secretary for War in London announcing the successful occupation of the position. It was worded as follows: 'To Staff Officer, Camp (Mount Prospect). From Colley. (By flag signal.) Send following to Secretary of War and to Wood: "Occupied Majuba Mountain last night. Immediately overlooking Boer position. Boers firing at us from below." (Received about 8 A.M.)'

The next message, sent about three-quarters of an hour later, can be read either as signifying some more serious outlook, or as a preparation for the occupation of the position at Lang's Nek which the Boers were then supposed to be abandoning. It ran thus: 'To Staff Officer. From Colley. (By flag.) Order up 60th and 15th Hussars from Newcastle to leave this afternoon and try and get in to-morrow morning. Convoy to wait Amiel. Dartnell to call in detachment Biggarsberg and Ardincross Farm, and be ready to follow. Inform Wood.'

A few minutes later a message followed asking 'Are ammunition and groceries at post above O'Neill's farm?' And at 9.30 came the next signal.

It was sent by Colonel Herbert Stewart, the chief staff officer. 'Send out some rations to post with a troop of 15th Hussars. All very comfortable. Boers wasting ammunition. One man wounded in foot.'

Slight though these flag signals were, they throw light upon the forenoon hours and show us a good deal of what was in the General's mind. It appears to have been his intention, after he had placed the troops in position on the Majuba, laid out the three redoubts already mentioned, and seen their construction begun, to return to Mount Prospect, leaving Commander Romilly, R.N., in command of the force on the mountain. He would then, with the troops ordered from Newcastle, and with all the knowledge he had gained of the Boer positions behind the Nek by his survey of their camps from the Majuba, be in a position to direct an attack upon the front combined with a flank movement from the mountain, if such operations became necessary.

It has been said in a former chapter that until the Majuba had been actually occupied, any movement of troops from Newcastle might only have resulted in alarming the Boers and frustrating the object of the night march. Once the Majuba was gained and the dispositions of the Boer forces seen, the moment had arrived for bringing up the reinforcements. There is no reason to suppose that Colley had the least idea of renewing the attack on Lang's Nek until all the troops then at, or near, Newcastle were available. This concentration might have required three days to effect—the period for which his troops were provisioned. How far the knowledge of the position gained after daylight affected his original plan cannot be known, but the apparent preparations

of the Boers to abandon the Nek would have called for increased force at Mount Prospect to secure the advantage of the withdrawal, and would have required an earlier occupation of the Nek than may have originally been contemplated. Hence no doubt the order to Newcastle for the troops already there. A successful occupation of the Majuba did not ensure to Colley an immediate withdrawal of the Boers; but it could not be without effect upon the course of negotiation, and upon the tenor of future instructions from home; while in any event the mountain was the vantage-point which would make certain the success of a subsequent attack, if the Boers, in face of the occupation of the Majuba and the concentration at Mount Prospect, remained still in position.

It has been falsely said of the General that, feeling assured of the safety of the position, he had lain down to rest and knew little or nothing of what was passing on the exterior line of defence. On the contrary he had been throughout the morning in close touch with that outer ring. His movements during the forenoon hours are thus described:

> Sir George Colley kept moving about round our lines. He never rested for more than a few minutes together, but there was no sign of excitement or trepidation about him. Everything he did was in his usual deliberate, quiet, cool manner, and that was his demeanour as long as he was alive that day, or at least up to the moment I saw him last. Every now and again he went to the brow overlooking Mount Prospect Camp, where a flag signalman was stationed, and communicated with either the officer in command of the redoubt occupied by the company of Highlanders on the ridge, or else with Colonel Bond at our standing camp.

These frequent visits to the line most exposed to

the enemy's fire, that facing north and east, are also mentioned in other statements.

We will glance now at the plains and valleys below the Majuba an hour before noon. The Highlanders in the post at the foot of the mountain were still entrenching; the troop of Hussars and an additional company of Rifles had reached that place, bringing ten mules laden with reserve ammunition (20 boxes); another mule carrying groceries for the force on the mountain had also reached the post about daylight, but in attempting to get to the top of the mountain, the conductor was wounded and taken prisoner by a Boer patrol.

In the camp at Mount Prospect everything was quiet. The officers and men left behind bemoaned their fate. 'We could see the smoke from the volleys distinctly,' wrote one of the officers, 'and I have a vivid recollection of our laughing as we sat in our mess, and wishing we were up there potting "Pinheads" as they came up the hill.'

Crossing over to the north side of the Nek we find a very different state of affairs. The practised eye of Commandant Smidt had discovered that the force holding the mountain was not a large one, and the word had been given to storm the summit. For this duty two small separate bodies of Boers, all tried men and deadly shots, were told off under different leaders. These bands were to climb the mountain at different places, and await, at spots not far below the summit, the signal for assault. Meanwhile the same steady rifle fire was to be maintained from round the northern and western slopes of the mountain. On the edge of the top, at every puff of smoke, and at every figure showing against the sky-line, this unre-

mitting fire was to be kept up. It was not the waste of ammunition the staff officer's message described It prevented a full examination being made of the ground below the first precipitous drop of the mountain. It covered, almost as well as artillery could have covered, the advance of the small assaulting parties. It kept the strain upon the defenders of the position still tightly drawn. If in this war the fighting General of the Boers had done nothing except the attack he was now directing against the Majuba, the manner in which he carried out the movement would suffice to stamp him as one of the ablest leaders of mounted infantry that have appeared in modern war.

It was about 11 o'clock that General Colley, in one of his circuits round the summit, came to the position held by the Naval Brigade under Commander Romilly, at the edge of the basin near the point of ascent. This was the spot selected by the General for erecting one of the three redoubts for occupation by the troops at night. The group of officers standing near the edge of the mountain at this place was soon noticed by a Boer marksman, and bullets began to drop close to the little party. Commander Romilly inquired of one of the staff officers the range at which the Boer was firing. The estimate of distance was 900 yards. Scarcely had the answer been given before a bullet, striking into the group, hit the Commander in the body, wounding him mortally. Although he fell, rolled over into the hollow, it is said that he instinctively cried out to those around him that he was 'all right.' 'I heard,' writes Surgeon Mahon, R.N., in his report, 'a bullet explode close to us. I heard the General say, "Captain Romilly is hit;" and turning round saw General Colley kneeling

by the side of the commander, who was lying on the ground about four yards from us.' The men loved this brave officer, and his fall was a sorrow and a shock to them.[3] To the General it was a still deeper blow. Commander Romilly was the officer he had destined to succeed to the command of the entire force on the summit of the mountain when the time came for his own return to the camp at Mount Prospect. It is said that when the wounded officer was brought back to the hospital at the wells in the hollow the face of the General wore a grave and reserved expression. Another old friend had fallen at his side.

Still there appeared no cause for misgiving as to the result of a Boer attack. All this uphill shooting had resulted in putting only three or four men *hors de combat*, and only one case was serious. There was nothing to indicate that the attack was not a curtain behind which retreat from the Nek was being carried out. Looking over the brow directly above the Boer laagers the waggons could be seen inspanned; some even had moved away from the Nek northwards towards the Transvaal.

A little after 11 o'clock the following message was signalled from Majuba to the camp at Mount Prospect. 'Send following to Secretary of State: "Boers still firing heavily on hill, but have broken up laager and begin to move away. I regret to say Commander Romilly dangerously wounded; other

[3] A year or two earlier there had occurred in the ship to which he belonged a terrible outbreak of smallpox. The disease was almost confined to the black 'Kroo' boys, as they are called who are taken for service on board ships of war on the African station. Commander Romilly would not abandon the stricken sailors whatever might be their colour. Attending to them closely through their sickness, he too caught the infection, and though he recovered, it was to bear on what had been a handsome face the deep scars of the disease. Such things tell for much in a community of sailors or soldiers.

casualties, three men slightly wounded." ' And to the Commodore on the South African station another message was sent: 'Deeply regret to report Commander Romilly dangerously wounded.' This was the last message we know of from the hill-top. The general outlook of the situation on Majuba had undergone no change up to 11 o'clock, nor can we find in the narratives of survivors, written when their recollections were necessarily tinged with the shadow of the catastrophe that followed, a single word to indicate that a doubt existed in anybody's mind upon the security of the position.

Another hour passed. The midday sun hung almost vertically over the mountain. The reserves lay dozing in the central basin. The Boer fire still sounded on the lower slopes, replied to at intervals by our men at top in steady, and what seemed to be accurate, shooting. Especially was this the case among the detached groups of men occupying the isolated points already described—the two peaked koppies jutting out from the main mass of the mountain, forming on the north and west faces, those nearest to the Boers, flanking bastions from whose summits men could see further down the steep mountain sides than could they who held the ring of the hill-top. The flanking koppies were the keys of the summit, and were so regarded by the main portion of the defence line. As long as they were held, no enemy could possibly scale the last hundred feet of the mountain—that smooth ascent bare of trees, rounded like a skull, and so steep that only on hands and knees could it be climbed.

The koppie on the north-west corner of the mountain covered the northern flank of the ascent. The

one overlooking the western slope did the same service upon that side. From these points the shooting had been more sustained than in other parts of the line, but even in these places the expenditure of ammunition had been controlled, and when inquiries were made as to cartridges it was found that at half-past 12 o'clock only a few men in the most advanced positions had expended thirty rounds, and that by far the larger portion of the force had still in their possession the seventy rounds they originally carried. Such was the position of affairs on the summit at 1 o'clock, at which hour, according to Colonel Herbert Stewart's report, General Colley lay down at the northern side of the basin for a few minutes' rest. At his side sat Colonel Stewart, who was charged to rouse the General should any change occur in the situation. 'No change occurred,' continues the report, and within half an hour the General was again turning his attention to the redoubts.

During the last two hours a development on the part of the enemy had, however, taken place. Small parties of Boers had moved in closer to the mountain some five or six hundred yards lower down. The officer commanding the party of Highlanders overlooking the north face noticed this movement and reported it. The accuracy of the fire with which the Boers covered their advance may be judged by the fact that while crossing the short open space between his advanced line and the reserve, the officer's clothes were cut twice by bullets; but excepting the one or two slight casualties already mentioned, no loss had here occurred. A reinforcement from the reserve was sent back with the officer to the exposed point, and these, mostly, if not all, 58th men, were extended

with the men of the Highland regiment who already occupied that part of the firing line. The Boers still seemed to be wasting their ammunition in fruitless fire upon the mountain. The last hundred feet, almost precipitous, appeared to defy ascent, and the belief in the impossibility of any attempt to take the top was as complete as ever.

The fire from below now became less severe; there appeared to be altogether on the mountain a force which in the opinion of the officer already mentioned might amount to from three to four hundred men. It was difficult to say what was the number of Boers who had crossed the open space five hundred yards beneath and disappeared in the unseen terraces below the upper drop of the hill, but their concentration in that dead ground did not affect those last hundred or more feet of bare smooth acclivity, climbing which any enemy bold enough to face the final ascent could be easily annihilated from the flanking koppies.[4]

But now about the hour of half-past one there occurred, immediately below the koppie commanding the northern face, a sudden and totally unexpected movement on the part of the enemy. A body of Boers, about sixty in number, had a little while earlier reached a position some eighty yards below this isolated projecting point. There they had paused and reconnoitred; peering cautiously from between brushwood, their scouts could see the soldiers in the koppie above, as every now and again they stood up to fire at some Boer rifleman four or five hundred yards below, thus showing themselves against the sky-line.

[4] It was afterwards ascertained that the fire of our men had been altogether ineffective; the total Boer loss throughout the day was only one killed and five wounded.

Sketch
shewing ground between
MAJUBA AND THE BOER CAMPS.

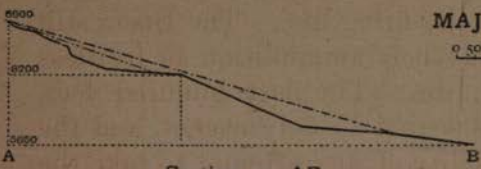
0 50 100 200 300 400 500 600 800 1000 Yds.

Scale, 3½ inches to 1 mile.

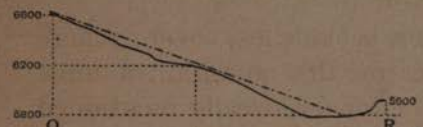
Contours at 50 ft. V.I.

N.B. Ground shaded is "dead" to direct fire from the 6600 contour.

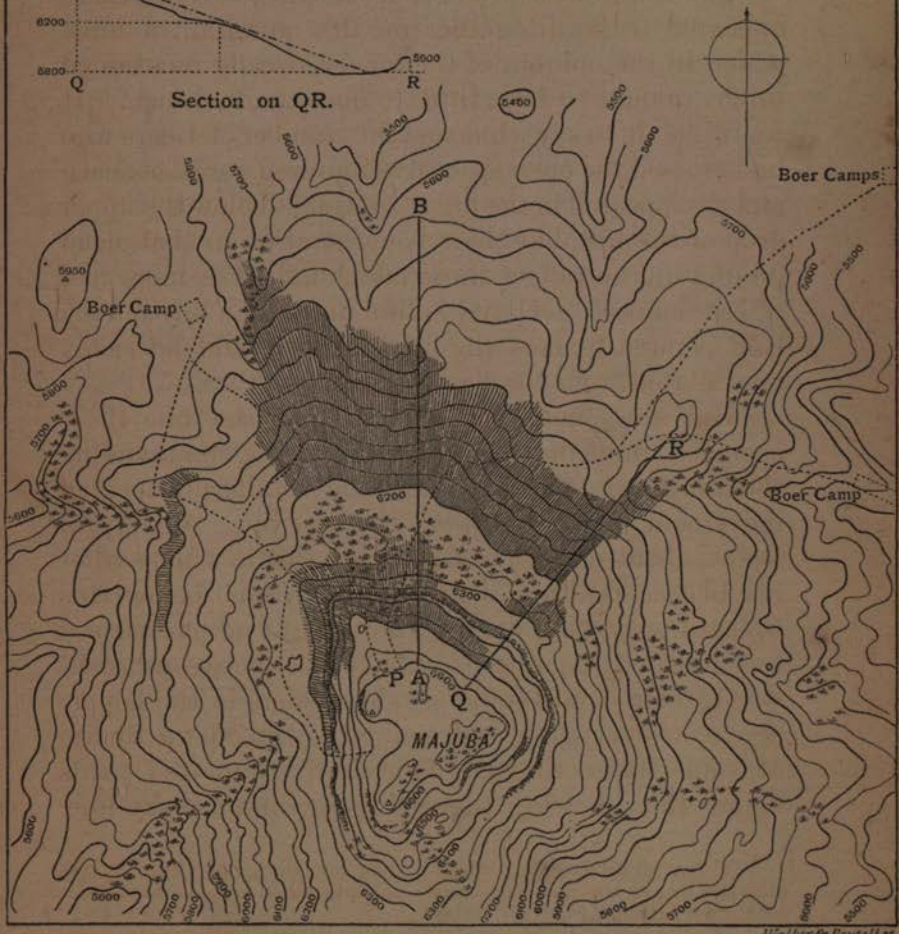
P. *Point where first attack came in.*
Q. " " second " " "



Section on AB.



Section on QR.



Walker & Boutall sc.

Suddenly, acting under a command given by one of the captains who had been closely watching the procedure of the soldiers above, a body of Boers with rifles at 'the present' stepped back a pace or two from the rock which had hitherto concealed them, and fired a volley point-blank upon the figures above. The effect was instantaneous. The men on the koppie overhead were killed, wounded, or dispersed, and the sudden collapse of the picquet so dumbfoundered those who were in sight of the spot that they recoiled instinctively from the brow of the hill, thus leaving unguarded the only paths by which ascent to the summit was practicable on that side.

At the moment when this sudden outburst of firing took place from the ledge immediately below the north crest, the General, who a few minutes before had begun to detail the arrangements for the construction of the redoubts which were to serve for holding the mountain against a night attack, moved towards the point whence the fire came. Midway to the north crest he met the men retreating from it.

There is much confusion and discrepancy in the accounts of the events now occurring. In such moments of confused action and equally confused thought, the sequence is easily lost, nor can afterthought ever wholly relink the broken chain. It is, however, certain that a few seconds after the outbreak of sudden fire below the koppie, the surprise and panic which had cleared the koppie of its garrison spread to those of the Highlanders holding the crest who were posted immediately behind this koppie, and these men ran back towards the central basin. At the same moment the reserve men in the basin had been taken forward to reinforce the point at which fire had so suddenly broken out.

At the first indication of danger, the officers had sprung forward, the General moving at once to the threatened point—all urging by voice and gesture the men of the reserve to follow in the same direction. But before these mixed companies could shake themselves out and reach the fighting line, the backward wave had begun. The two lines met on the exposed slope of the hill; there occurred here a moment of great confusion, which finally shaped itself into a general backward rush, and neither voice nor gesture nor reinforcement could arrest it. The men of the reserve had not been too ready to go forward when the first outbreak of sudden fire had called for their assistance, and now catching the contagion of panic which had just caused the men on the crest to abandon it, they turned and ran back towards the basin they had a moment before quitted. Thus the crest line of the mountain was left open to the further advance of the Boers, now at the very lip of the summit. A few moments of strenuous effort on the part of the General, aided by his officers, succeeded in rallying the men and restoring to them the outward form of order. In the central hollow they were stopped in their retreat, and turning, they inclined towards the north-west, rallied on the ridge of the basin, and fronted again behind its prolongation on the left, which there consisted of a steeper escarpment of rock. The new position behind which they stood was by no means a weak one. It was formed by the ridge, in some places an outcrop of rock, marking generally the north-western side of the central basin. The line of rocks, however, was not continuous, but had gaps where the slope of the ground descending into the basin alone offered shelter. The eastern end of this ridge

formed a denser group, or cluster, of rocks rising from the centre of the northern crest line. Thence the rocky reef extended south-west, and beyond its termination the koppie held by the Highlanders stood upon the western edge of the hill, overlooking the descent on that side. Between these two knolls the line of broken rocks stretched across an angle of the summit. From the outer slope of the mountain whence the Highlanders had retreated, to this second position at the rocks, the distance at the widest part was a little over a hundred yards. In that interval the ground fell forty feet, at first almost imperceptibly, then with steeper rolls and in closer contours which prevented men at the central part of the ridge seeing the actual edge of the mountain. The weakness of the position lay in this outer roll of surface, which, after some forty yards immediately in front of the rocks, hid the ground beyond.

In the momentary lull following the rally there was time to see how far the few minutes of confusion and retreat had compromised the situation. The actual number of the enemy that had so far shown at the edge of the mountain was very small—not above sixty men, but these were all expert shots, and the quickness and accuracy of their fire no doubt impressed our soldiers with the idea that their assailants were far more numerous. Our men could not have realised how few places of possible ascent existed in the whole circumference. Unfortunately, by the abandonment of the northern face, two of these few places were now in possession of the enemy. It would not be easy to determine whether the moral apprehension that the Boers would appear on every side—or the material disadvantage involved in the

loss of the command of two places at which an enemy could find access to the summit—was the most serious in its effect upon the military situation at the moment when the rallied troops were about to make a last effort to hold the hill-top. The panic of the first retreat was still upon them, and that it was already spreading to other parts of the original line of defence was shown by momentary arrivals at the rocks of men from parts of the position so far quite unmolested by the Boers. Two circumstances combined to produce unsteadiness in these remoter parts of the little field which had suddenly become a battle-ground of intense importance. The bullets, fired with extraordinary rapidity by the Boers on the northern face, flew fast among the few men holding the south side, the rim of which was about fifty feet higher than the opposite edge from which the Boers fired. Again, some men of the reserve running back through the basin had passed on over the opposite brow, through the ranks of the men holding it, and were already descending the mountain by the track they had come up.

Thus it was that a position of fair natural strength —and capable of being further strengthened could any possibility of losing the brow have been foreseen— now became weakened in its elements of resistance by the fact that the men who were holding it had suddenly retreated into it. Although in this moment of suspense they were certainly stronger in number than the enemy about to advance against them, all the weight of moral force was with that enemy, and in war the great captain has told us that moral to physical force is as three to one. Never had that famous saying received more conclusive proof than it was now to get.

The dispositions which the few moments of delay in the attack of the Boers allowed the General and his staff to make were these. The men, clubbed together at and behind the line of rocks, were somewhat straightened out to right and left, and efforts were made to get them into their places by companies and corps. Men from the rear of the position were sent to reinforce the koppies on the right and left flanks.

When the final phase on the Majuba was about to begin, the General was standing in the centre of the line. So far, despite the firing, the confusion, and the retreat, there were but few wounded men in the hospital in the basin. The General is described by an observer who was close behind him at this moment as being 'cool and collected as ever.' It is the last account we get of him but one.

The upward wave of the Boer storming party had meanwhile gathered itself at the abandoned brow, and was now about to break over the crest, and roll forward towards the centre of the summit. The men composing this leading attack, though few in numbers, were admirably handled, or perhaps it would be more correct to describe the method of their advance not as being due to the will of one acting upon the many, so much as to the instinct of each individual unit acting on the whole body, and producing, without order or command, the best result obtainable. This, indeed, had been the secret of all the successes the Boers had hitherto gained. Their methods of fighting, their fire tactics and knowledge of ground were instincts imbibed from early youth upwards in the exercise of daily life amid the storm and sunshine of this wild land. Ours were the dogmatic teachings

of the barrack square, the acquired lessons of unreasoned drill, the accepted formulas of collective movement, subordinating action to one mind and one command, and liable to produce inertness and helplessness whenever circumstances became such as previous precept had not contemplated. It has been already said that the slope of the ground from the rocks to the brow of the mountain concealed the advance of the Boers until they were about forty yards distant from our men. Then across those few yards of level space a fast and furious fire broke out. The first result of the fire upon our ranks was not discouraging. It was some seconds before it assumed accuracy. We seemed to be throwing quite as heavy a weight of lead upon the storming party as they were directing against us. And so no doubt we were, but while our volleys flew harmlessly over the heads of the Boers, theirs were striking low on the rocks behind which our men stood. Nothing was to be seen of the enemy except the muzzles of rifles appearing and disappearing, the incessant spurting of smoke, and now and again a head showing for a moment over the grassy level.

At the first opening of this fire our men had fixed bayonets, whether with the object of resisting or delivering a charge is not known. But the Boers had no intention of coming closer, and it is extremely doubtful if, in face of the storm of lead then sweeping the level space, any of our troops, had they essayed a charge, would have reached the enemy. While thus for three or four minutes this *feu d'enfer* went on, small parties of Boers, disengaging from the rear of their main attack, began to show themselves on the right flank, where at the edge of the hill-top the

thick cluster of rocks stood, equally commanding the outer slope of the hill and the inner depression. This point had now become the key of the position.

It has never been clearly ascertained what was the exact sequence of events at this important point after the first volley had been delivered by the Boers from below the crest, but it would appear that shortly after the first party of Boers had gained the summit a second body of about equal strength scaled the last ridge of the mountain at this rocky cluster, joined hands with the men who had already effected a lodgment on the summit, and began to work forward round the right flank of our position. In an official report we read that at the moment the attack of the Boers was about to begin at the rocks, the sailors who were stationed near the point at which we had ascended 'came running down, saying they were attacked from the east.'[5] They were sent back to their post. At this critical moment there was a lessening of resisting force at both flanks, showing itself in the steadily increasing trickle of men into the hollow behind the central fight. Some of these arrivals excused their presence in the hollow by asserting that they had been ordered to bring fresh ammunition, but there was no lack of ammunition, nor was there need of reinforcements, for already the ridge held more than the number required to man it, and a crowd or clump of soldiers was collected in rear of it. The rocks afforded good cover to our men. It was now of vital importance to secure the threatened flanks, and

[5] This may be accounted for by the fact already mentioned that some of the bullets fired by the Boers on the north face now flew over the hollow and fell among the sailors. The naval report, however does not mention any attack except that 'on the other (*i.e.* the north) side of the mountain, towards which a naval officer took a few sailors, but was ordered back to his post. (see *S. Africa*, c. 2250, 1881).

desperate efforts were made to deploy the crowded ranks to right and left, but in the din of fight and the incessant crackling of musketry little could be heard and nothing done to induce or enforce order. A small body of men were with difficulty moved from the centre to reinforce the cluster of rocks on the right, about which anxiety had now become general, for the Boers, gathering strength at this part of the brow, were edging more and more round this flank, and their shots had already begun to strike into the basin and along the rear of the line holding the rocks. The chance remained that the party moving to the right would secure that threatened flank, but they never reached so far. As they neared the foot of the knoll, they were seen to turn to their right and disappear into a fold in the mountain. A minute or two later the remaining men on the knoll gave way, and the Boers were quickly in possession of the vantage-point. The right flank of the main line of defence was now completely turned, and from that moment the Majuba was lost.

What happened at the rocks will never be accurately known. But it is certain that suddenly the right of the line broke and fled; that the impulse of panic ran quickly along the confused body of men; and that, in less time than it takes to tell it, the whole of the troops rushed backwards from the rocks to the brow they had ascended nine hours earlier. It is said that a wild cry rose from them as they broke. It is certain that scarcely had the rout begun, before the Boers, realising that the hill was theirs, rapidly crowned the abandoned ridge and poured fire upon the retreating troops in the hollow immediately below them, and on the upward slope of the opposite ridge

over which the fugitives were crowding. It was here that the loss was so heavy. In every direction men were falling under this unerring fire, delivered well within a hundred yards of distance. Soon the Boers pressed on to the southern rim of the mountain, and their volleys smote the rocky declivities of the descent, carrying wounds and death far down the mountain side.

And meanwhile the General? To find him, we must go back to the ridge where the fighting line had stood. From the moment of the first retreat from the brow of the mountain to that of the final rush from the rocks was probably not more than an interval of fifteen minutes. The position taken by Colley in the centre of the line which was to meet the final assault of the Boers was the one he kept until the line broke. That throughout he maintained the same vigilant, active, but calm and collected demeanour, is shown in all the reports of the survivors. A moment before the line broke, a correspondent already quoted says that he 'saw his Excellency standing within ten paces directing some men to extend to the right.'

No order to retire ever issued from the General's lips. When the line gave way on the right, the panic ran quickly to the centre, in front of which the General stood. A group of men still held the koppie on the extreme left, but between that point and the centre there was an interval of open ground.[6] It is said that a few men remained a little while near the General after the remainder of the line had gone. When this 'cluster' went, he stood alone.

'Oh, my men, do not run.' It was thus he had

[6] The group on this koppie on the western face held their ground until they were all killed or wounded save two.

described, two and twenty years earlier, the closing scene in the life of a Kaffir chief far down in the Kaffrarian forest. 'When fresh men came up, his people began to give, but Tola called out, "Oh, my men, don't run, but follow me."' How strangely strong must the same thought have now come to Colley as that stream of men poured away from him at the Majuba! 'Oh, my men, do not run.'

The spot at which he was standing alone was at a little distance from the temporary hospital, and ten or fifteen yards from the ledge of rocks which the Boer frontal attack had now reached. To his right as he stood facing the ledge, the left flank of the Boer advance was already moving along the southern crest and drawing in towards the hospital in the hollow. His position therefore in relation to the enemy was encompassed on two sides by advancing lines, both of which were firing rapidly across the angle of ground, the size of which their converging movement was momentarily making smaller. No other figure was standing erect in that bullet-swept space, nor had any dead fallen near the spot where he stood, for it was among the fugitives on the further slope of the basin that the heaviest loss occurred. There were, however, many wounded men lying in what was called the hospital a few yards distant. Few among them were able in their pain and danger—for they were now shot at and over from two sides of their position—to note or think about other things. In the three or four accounts afterwards given by these men there are many discrepancies; comparing them with each other, with the statements of some Boers who were in the advancing lines, and with whatever information of the preceding

moments exists, the balance seems to incline to the account given by a corporal whose hurt was less severe than those of his comrades, whose statement was made immediately after the cessation of the fight, and recorded almost at the same moment. 'The General, said this man, 'never moved from where he was when our men retired. He stood there trying to rally the men, and one of the Boers shot him straight in the forehead some time after the day was lost. Had he chosen to turn, he would have had as good a chance as any one else of getting away unhurt.' When these words were spoken, near the foot of the mountain on the day of Majuba, the man who uttered them had in his possession evidence that he had been near the final scene. He held in his hand the puggaree of the helmet which Colley had that day worn.[7]

In the sense in which death can have any pain or bitterness, George Colley died when his men broke and fled. This mountain, which had seemed but an hour

[7] The allusion to the General's death in the official report of Colonel Herbert Stewart, who was not so near at the moment, is to the same effect:

'I had been sent by the General to his left to extend the men to the right. I was doing so when the retreat commenced. I was unable to see him until, as I turned round, I saw him walking slowly some twenty yards in front of the Boer line, which was advancing and firing rapidly. I moved towards him for some two or three steps when I saw him fall. Very shortly afterwards I received a blow on my leg, knocking me down, and after vainly endeavouring for some thirty hours to escape from amidst the Boers by whom I was cut off, I was taken prisoner.

'Every officer that I saw was doing his very utmost to instil that confidence into his men that the sudden retreat of the front line of the defence had somewhat rudely shaken.

'To the advance of the Boers being unseen and hence unreported, the consequent retirement, and the fact that the efforts of the officers were fruitless to check the demoralisation ensuing thereon, I attribute the loss of the position.'—Colonel Herbert Stewart's report (signed copy lent by Lady Pomeroy-Colley).

ago the solid base of a brilliant success, had proved to him the shifting quicksand of military misfortune.

Amid many vague and contradictory rumours this certainty remains. Drawing ever increasing fire from the converging lines of the enemy, he found a soldier's death on the field he would not leave. On the summit of Majuba, sword in hand, facing his foes—he fell. Less tragic might easily have been the closing scene, but not even the consolation of victory could have added to the quiet heroism of that supreme end which comes evenly to victor and to vanquished on the battle-field.[8]

[8] 'I have just received, and am sending home by this mail, the helmet worn by your gallant husband on February 27. . . . Roos, who led the left column of the attack, and who was one of the first Boers up on the plateau, told me he saw your husband standing up facing the Boers just before he was shot. But the Boers did not then know who he was.'—Natal, Sept. 17, 1881. From Sir Evelyn Wood to Lady Pomeroy-Colley.

'I saw him [the General] near the centre of the plateau on the top of the hill. They [the Boers] asked me to identify him, and this I did. He was only wounded once, and that through the top of the skull. Death must have been instantaneous. From the direction of the wound, he must have been facing the Boers when hit.'—H.M.S. 'Flora,' Simon's Bay, May 11, 1881. From Edward Mahon, Surgeon, R.N., to Henry Colley, Esq.

APPENDIX

I.

Sir George's grave stands first in the sad succession between that of Colonel Deane and the boundary wall, where—by some prophetic chance—a vacant space had been left. He had often expressed a feeling of strong repugnance to the practice of removal of the dead, and in accordance with what would undoubtedly have been his own wish, he rests in peace beneath the shadow of the Amajuba.

The wooden cross which marked his grave at first was replaced by a cross of marble bearing on its base the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF
SIR GEORGE POMEROY-COLLEY
K.C.S.I., C.B., C.M.G.,
H.M. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR SOUTH-EAST AFRICA
GOVERNOR OF NATAL
MAJOR-GENERAL COMMANDING FORCES
BORN 1ST NOVEMBER 1835
KILLED IN ACTION ON AMAJUBA MOUNTAIN
SUNDAY 27TH FEBRUARY 1881.

'O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.'

II.

Letter from Lord Lytton to Miss Pomeroy-Colley upon the death of her Brother.

Knebworth: March 10, 1881.

Dear Miss Colley,—We have never met before, but we meet now in that common grief which unites, how closely, all who have loved and honoured your dear and noble brother—as loved and honoured he will ever be, and henceforth more than ever by me and mine. To you and yours this irreparable loss is beyond words—I cannot speak of it. Nor yet of all that is lost to our country in the loss of one who, had he lived, would assuredly have been one of England's greatest soldiers and statesmen. But if I feel that what is to me a duty will not seem to you an intrusion, it is because the very comfortlessness of my own loss may perhaps be of some comfort to yours. It seems like some poor part of my life-long obligation to my dear and ever honoured friend that to you, the sister he so loved, I should first be saying what I yearn to place on record before all the world—how much he was to me, how my wife and I revered him, how the fulness of his worth was felt by us, how constantly we shall love and look up to him still, and how deep is the pride with which we cherish the memory of his wisdom, his courage, his splendid intellect and golden heart.

Although out of my own life a source of light and strength is gone with that great soul, I feel already what a living force remains, still uniting me to him and leading me up to him, in the memory of his life and the beauty of his example. And so I feel sure it will be with all who have ever felt his influence.

Had his daring schemes and heroic efforts been crowned with success, we might have mourned him less bitterly, but I don't think I, for one, should then have felt so profoundly, or with a sense so akin to worship, the perfect grandeur and sweetness of that stately spirit, which shone brighter, and rose higher in all his acts and words and ways, during those terrible days of undeserved disappointment, throughout which he must have suffered so acutely.

I feel that henceforth in those hours of frustrated exertion and disappointed hope, when the heart fails and the head droops, your brother's image will stand before me, as I see it now, and shame away despair.

Surely it is not in vain that such men live or die.

Believe me, dear sister of my ever dear friend, in deep sympathy and affection,

Your true fellow-mourner,

LYTTON.

III.

LINES BY HIS KINSMAN, THE LATE ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

IN MEMORIAM G. P. C.

February 27, 1881

Gentle and brave, well skilled in that dread lore
Which mightiest nations dare not to unlearn;
Fair lot for thee had leapt from Fortune's urn,
Just guerdon of long toil; and more and more
We deemed was for her favourite in store;
Nor failed prophetic fancy to descry
Wreaths of high praise, and crowns of victory,
Which in our thought thy brows already wore.

But He, who portions out our good and ill,
Willed an austerer glory should be thine,
And nearer to the Cross than to the Crown.
Then lay, ye mourners, there your burden down,
And hear calm voices from the inner shrine
That whisper, Peace, and say, Be still, be still.

Richard Chenevix Trench.

IV.

GENERAL ORDER ISSUED BY SIR GEORGE COLLEY TO THE TROOPS IN NATAL ON THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES WITH THE BOERS.

Headquarters, Pietermaritzburg:
December 28, 1881.

The Major-General Commanding regrets to inform the troops of his command that a detachment of 250 men of the 94th Regiment,

on its march from Leydenberg to Pretoria, was surprised and overwhelmed by the Boers; 120 being killed and wounded and the rest taken prisoners. The attack seems to have been made while the troops were crossing a spruit, and extended to guard a long convoy. The Major-General trusts to the courage, spirit, and discipline of the troops of his command to enable him promptly to retrieve this misfortune, and to vindicate the authority of Her Majesty and the honour of the British arms. It is scarcely necessary to remind soldiers of the incalculable advantage which discipline, organisation, and trained skill give them over more numerous but undisciplined forces. These advantages have been repeatedly proved, and have never failed to command success in the end, against greater odds and greater difficulties than we are now called on to contend with. To all true soldiers the loss we have suffered will serve as an incentive and stimulus to greater exertions; and the Major-General knows well he can rely on the troops he has the honour to command to show that endurance and courage which are the proud inheritances of the British army. The stain cast on our arms must be quickly effaced, and rebellion must be put down, but the Major-General trusts that officers and men will not allow the soldierly spirit which prompts to gallant action to degenerate into a feeling of revenge. The task now forced on us by the unprovoked action of the Boers is a painful one under any circumstances; and the General calls on all ranks to assist him in his endeavours to mitigate the suffering it must entail. We must be careful to avoid punishing the innocent for the guilty, and must remember that, though misled and deluded, the Boers are in the main a brave and high-spirited people and actuated by feelings that are entitled to our respect. In the operations now about to be undertaken, the General confidently trusts that the good behaviour of the men will give him as much cause of pride and satisfaction as their conduct and gallantry before the enemy, and that the result of their efforts will be a speedy and successful termination to the war.

V.

Despatch written by Sir George Colley to the Secretary of State for War after the action at Ingogo.

Army Headquarters, Mount Prospect: February 12, 1881.

Sir,—For some days after the engagement at the Lang's Nek, reported in my despatch of the 3rd instant, the Boers remained quiet, occupied, apparently, in further concentrating their forces and strengthening their position; and our communications with Newcastle were uninterrupted. I sent the Natal Mounted Police back to Newcastle at once to guard against any raids on that part of Natal, and some days later sent in the bulk of our transport, with the double object of reducing the number of animals in camp and bringing out fresh supplies when opportunity should offer.

2. On the 3rd a large convoy of wounded was sent into Newcastle, and, up to the 6th, waggons with bread and other supplies reached the camp unmolested. The post ran regularly and the telegraph line was uninterrupted.

3. On the 7th the post, proceeding as usual with a small escort, was fired upon by a party of Boers at a point a little beyond the double drift on the Ingogo, and obliged to return. The escort reported having seen about 50 or 100 Boers on the ridge between the Ingogo and Imbazane valleys. The same evening I received information from other sources that the Boers had detached a small force to harass our communications and intercept waggons, &c., passing between this and Newcastle.

4. On the morning of the 8th I moved out with a force of five companies 60th Rifles under Colonel Ashburnham, two field and two mountain guns under Captain Greer, R.A., and a detachment of 38 mounted troops under Major Brownlow, King's Dragoon Guards, to patrol the road, and meet and escort some waggons expected from Newcastle. My mounted force was necessarily very weak, owing to the withdrawal of the Natal Police and to the casualties suffered by the mounted squadron on the 28th ultimo.

5. The Ingogo River crosses the Newcastle road about five miles south of this camp, taking its rise in a deep recess or bend in the Drakensberg, and running from west to east, through a valley about five miles wide, to the Buffalo river, which it joins

about four miles below the road. Two main branches unite just below where the road crosses them ; whence this crossing is known as the 'Double Drift.' The two fords, which are about 100 yards apart, are rocky, with a rapid current, and sometimes dangerous in the sudden floods to which these mountain streams are liable.

6. The ridges to the north of the river, which are spurs of the remarkable square-topped mountain immediately overlooking this camp, and named the Umquelo, fall steeply in a series of steps to the Ingogo ; the road winds down a long stony hill, two miles in length, between two of these spurs, commanded for its whole length by the ridges on each side. On the south side of the river a plain or very gentle rise extends for more than a mile to the foot of the ridge or plateau which separates the Ingogo and Imbezane valleys. This ridge is nearly level on its summit, strewn with rocks and boulders, and irregularly cut by rocky valleys, now expanding into a broad plateau, and again narrowing to a mere neck. Its slopes, as a rule, are stony but not very steep. The road rises to its summit by an easy ascent along the face of a projecting spur.

7. Leaving two mountain guns and a company of the 60th on a commanding position on the crest of the ridge to the north of the Ingogo, I moved down the road with the rest of the force, our front covered by the mounted troops, and the ridges on each side occupied by infantry. No enemy, however, was seen until our scouts, cresting the hills beyond the Ingogo, reported Boer patrols in sight. The column, having crossed the Ingogo and drawn in its flankers, halted and formed on the plain south of the Double Drift, and then resumed its march.

8. As we approached the foot of the ridge already described, reports were brought in that the Boers were in considerable force in our front, showing a strong skirmishing line, with four supports of 50 or 60 men each ; and shortly afterwards our videttes were driven in. I immediately pushed forward with the advanced guard to occupy the point of the ridge which the road ascends. As we did so the Boers showed in large numbers about half a mile distant, and at once galloped forward boldly to dispute the ridge, and to take advantage of the cover which the intersecting valleys afforded. The guns were brought into action, but the Boers had already got under cover, and now pushed up the valleys wherever cover could be got, directing a heavy and accurate fire on our guns and skirmishers, at the same time throwing their

right rapidly forward to envelop us. The companies of the 60th, as they came up the hill, were pushed forward to meet these attacks, and in a few minutes the engagement became heavy and general.

9. The ground occupied by us was a small plateau, roughly triangular in shape, forming part of the main ridge, with which it is connected by necks slightly lower than the plateau we held The enemy's attack embraced the south and western faces of the triangle and the eastern angle. Part of the plateau was fringed with rocks, affording good cover, but towards the eastern angle there was no cover except such as the grassy brow of the hill afforded; and one company of the 60th Rifles pushed forward in the angle to cover the guns, and meeting the Boers at close range suffered terribly from the close and accurate fire of the Boers, who were able to seize some rocks on the slope giving good cover.

10. With a moderate mounted force at my disposal it would not have been difficult to have rolled up the Boer right, which was dangerously extended and exposed. But the small mounted detachment under Major Brownlow, already reduced by casualties among the horses, was too weak for such an attempt. The level top of the plateau afforded no cover for our horses, and these in consequence suffered cruelly. The artillery, also exposed to a concentrated fire, lost so heavily that I found it necessary to withdraw the guns to a less exposed position, from which, however, they still fired shells occasionally when opportunity offered.

11. When it became evident that the attack was a serious and sustained one, and that reinforcements were coming to the Boers, I sent orders to camp for three companies of the 58th Regiment, to move out and occupy the ridges over the Ingogo. Later in the afternoon, when it was clear that the enemy had no force in our left rear which could cut the reinforcements off from camp, I directed them to endeavour to push across the Ingogo towards us, holding, however, the spur immediately overhanging and commanding the Double Drift.

12. The action commenced a little after 12, and for some time the fire was very heavy. Towards 3, however, it began to slacken, and the enemy apparently abandoned the idea of trying to win the position, though a steady and very accurate fire was still maintained, any one at all exposing himself being almost certainly struck. Our men fired with great steadiness and cool-

ness, husbanding their ammunition. Towards 4 o'clock the enemy could be seen removing his wounded from the field and collecting them at a point about a mile distant, and a little later began to draw off from our left front. About this time the Boer reinforcements, which had been dropping in during the afternoon, began to stream in in large numbers, and the attack on our right was for a time more vigorously renewed; but towards sundown the fire slackened on this side also, and the enemy withdrew and concentrated their forces in the valleys on our right. A movement made by a considerable body of Boers towards the Ingogo Drift, apparently with the object of intercepting our return to camp, was stopped by the appearance of the companies of the 58th on the ridge above the drift; and before dusk the fire had ceased altogether.

13. As I had not contemplated camping out, and had brought no supplies, and as the enemy was evidently preparing to renew the engagement with overwhelming numbers the following morning, I decided to withdraw to camp during the night. I was chiefly anxious about the guns, as the casualties among the horses had been so numerous that it seemed impossible to make up the necessary teams; but by withdrawing the team from the ammunition waggon, and collecting all available horses, we were able to horse, though insufficiently, the two guns.

14. As soon as it was dusk the fighting line was drawn in quietly, the guns run back, and the wounded collected. The severity of the fire had made it impossible in many cases to remove the wounded from the advanced positions; and the ambulances sent out had been unable to reach the plateau, the Boers having threatened to fire on them if they advanced while the engagement was going on. One waggon indeed which accompanied the column had been left at the foot of the hill, all the mules being killed and the waggon riddled with bullets. All waterproof sheets, blankets, great coats, &c., were collected, and the wounded sheltered as well as they could be until the ambulances could be sent up.

15. The night closed in with dark clouds, heavy pelting showers, and occasional lightning; the moon from time to time breaking through the clouds and lighting up the country in drifting gleams. When all arrangements were completed the force moved off in silence and perfect order, arranged in a hollow square; the guns, &c., in the centre, the infantry in skirmishing order on the four sides. On approaching the Double Drift the column halted, and

a patrol was sent out to ascertain that the drift was clear, and the column then filed across.

16. A heavy thunderstorm had now come on, the darkness was intense, and the river, swollen by the rains, was deep and rapid. Some of the first men trying to cross were swept down, but saved by a projecting sand bank. The rest were got over in detachments, holding hands. When all were across, the force resumed its march to camp, which it reached about 4 A.M.; the guns drawn up the hill by the 60th Rifles, the horses being unable to pull them up the steep and slippery road. The 58th companies remained in possession of the ridges commanding the drift until withdrawn the following day. The officer commanding the 58th had crossed the Ingogo as directed, but, as darkness came on before he could advance to our position, he rightly withdrew again, and concentrated his force on the hill immediately overlooking and commanding the Double Drift.

17. I enclose a return of the casualties, which, I regret to say, were severe. I have suffered a heavy personal loss (and the service generally has also suffered) in the death of Captain McGregor, R.E., my Assistant Military Secretary, a most promising officer, who would certainly have risen to distinction if spared, of soldierly bearing, of distinguished ability, and possessing in an eminent degree all the most valuable qualifications of a Staff Officer. He was killed early in the engagement, while pointing out the ground to Lieutenant Garrett, of the 60th, as the latter brought his company into action. I have also suffered, in common with the Civil Service and Colony of Natal, by the death of Mr. M. Stewart, Resident Magistrate, of the Ixopo Division, and one of the ablest and most promising Civil servants of Natal—who was attached to my staff as Dutch interpreter.

18. In Captain Greer, the Artillery has lost a gallant and valuable officer. Having volunteered and obtained leave from the Staff of Sir George Strahan, late Administrator of the Cape Colony, he organised and equipped a division of Field Artillery from guns in store at Durban; horses purchased at Newcastle, and a detachment of a Garrison Battery sent up from Cape Town; and rendered good service in command of the Artillery of the column. He was killed early in the engagement while directing the fire of his guns.

19. The 60th Rifles have lost two promising young officers in Lieutenant Garrett and 2nd Lieutenant O'Connell. The latter,

having been temporarily withdrawn from the fighting line with a few men to form a reserve, asked leave to rejoin his company, and was almost immediately killed. But the battalion has suffered a still heavier loss in the death of its adjutant, Lieutenant Wilkinson. Having distinguished himself through the engagement by his coolness and gallantry, volunteering for every difficult or dangerous task, he was drowned crossing the Ingogo after returning to the battlefield with assistance for the wounded. Of singularly winning disposition and manners, distinguished in all manly games, an excellent adjutant and most promising officer, few men of his standing could boast so many and such warm friends, or be so widely missed and deeply mourned.

20. The conduct of all ranks throughout this trying day was admirable. After the death of Captain Greer, Lieutenant Parsons continued to direct the guns and assist in working them under a heavy fire, until ordered to withdraw, having lost more than half of his detachment; and then, with the assistance of a few men of the 60th Rifles, again served the guns until severely wounded himself. The conduct of the men of the Royal Artillery well sustained the reputation of that corps. The comparatively young soldiers of the 60th Rifles behaved with the steadiness and coolness of veterans. At all times perfectly in hand, they held or changed their ground as directed without hurry or confusion, though under heavy fire, themselves fired steadily, husbanding their ammunition, and at the end of the day, with sadly reduced numbers, formed and moved off the ground with the most perfect steadiness and order; and finally, after 18 hours of continuous fatigue, readily and cheerfully attached themselves to the guns and dragged them up the long hill from the Ingogo, when the horses were unable to do so.

21. My thanks are due to Lieutenant-Colonel Ashburnham, 60th Rifles, for the manner in which he commanded his battalion, and the valuable assistance which he rendered me through the engagement; also to Major Brownlow, King's Dragoon Guards, for the manner in which he covered the advance of the force with the limited means at his disposal, and for his ever cool and ready help during the action. The Rev. Geo. M. Ritchie, Chaplain to the Forces, again distinguished himself, and honoured his office by his humane zeal and indefatigable attention to the wounded, with whom he remained until late the following night and until he had assisted at the burial of the dead. Major Essex, Column Staff Officer, and Lieutenant B. Hamilton, 15th Regiment, my aide-de-

camp, rendered me active and valuable assistance throughout the day.

22. I desire especially to mention the conduct of Sergeant-Major T. Toole, R.A., who well seconded Captain Greer and Lieutenant Parsons in working the guns till the end of the action, and on whom the charge of the guns and the arrangements for their withdrawal devolved when the latter officer was wounded; also of Sergeant-Major Wilkins, 60th Rifles, who throughout the day was to be seen wherever the fire was hottest, setting an example to the men by his cool and steady shooting and cheerful gallantry.

23. Surgeon McGann well maintained the distinguished reputation of the Medical Department for self-sacrificing exposure in attendance on the wounded. Until the arrival of the ambulances, with Surgeons Ring and Landon, he was the only medical officer with the force, and laboured indefatigably with the wounded.

24. The wounded were all removed to the base hospital at Newcastle in the course of the following day, and the dead buried on the field by a burial party sent out under a flag of truce. The dead officers were brought in and buried here.

25. I sent to offer the Boer Commandant medical assistance for their wounded, but the offer, though most gratefully acknowledged, was not accepted. Later, however, they sent to ask permission for waggons, with their wounded, to pass through our lines. They were courteous in allowing all facilities for the removal of the wounded, but seemed surprised and disappointed to find that we were not still in the same position in the morning.

26. I regret to say that we had to leave one Artillery ammunition waggon in the enemy's hands. Owing to the heavy casualties among the horses, it was not possible to do more than horse the two guns when we marched from the plateau. I sent out fresh Artillery horses during the night, and they succeeded in bringing the waggon down to the Double Drift, but, by that time, the river had risen so high that it was impossible to get the waggon across, and finally it had to be emptied of its contents and abandoned, the Artillery officer in charge, with his horses, making his way to Newcastle.

27. I estimated the force of the Boers at first engaged against us at about 300, afterwards increased by reinforcements to 800 or 1,000. Probably during the night their numbers were raised a good deal higher, as a continuous stream of reinforcements passed

to them from the Lang's Nek by a road leading round the back of the Umquelo mountain. Piet Joubert, the Commandant-General, and their 'Field Commandant-General,' Schmidt, were both present at the engagement. It is difficult to estimate their losses, which the Boers set down as small; but this is hardly consistent with the character of the engagement, or with the numbers that could be seen being removed from the field.

28. It is reported to me that Piet Joubert and a considerable part of the Boer force have returned to the Nek; that several hundred occupy a position between this and Newcastle, about eight miles from the latter place; and that another party are working round Newcastle, with a view to intercept the approaching reinforcements on the Ingogani river. Reinforcements, consisting of the 15th Hussars, 2nd Bn. 60th Rifles, 92nd Highlanders, and two guns, Naval Brigade, are now between Ladysmith and the Biggarsberg; and I have ordered a concentration on the latter point, whence the united force will now move forward in one strong column.

I have, &c. (Signed) G. Pomeroy-Colley,
Major-General.

VI.

Letter from Lieutenant Bruce Hamilton (A.D.C. to Sir George Colley) to his Sister.

February 11, 1881.

I have had so much copying, &c., to do ever since I last wrote to you, that I have had no time to write to any one until now. Sir George has no staff officer now except Major Essex and myself, and I don't know how he manages to get on. He will be glad when Major Macgregor and Colonel Stewart arrive to take some of the work off his hands—it is wonderful to see how he gets through everything himself, and I only wish I could be of more use to him than I am. He has written to you and will have told you all about Tuesday's fight—an unlucky day it was in losing so many brave officers and men. We started in the morning at about 9, not in the least expecting an engagement, though we thought it possible we might exchange a few shots with the enemy. I was riding my Waler, which had only arrived the day before; he behaved capitally throughout, though he had never been under fire before. About two miles from camp on the road to Newcastle

we saw some few Boers in the distance to our left; we then went on down to the Ingogo, leaving one company of 60th Rifles and two guns on the hill from which we had seen the Boers. We crossed the river safely and saw nothing of the Boers until about one mile further on, when we were close to the hill, on which we remained all day. They were on this hill as we approached it, but went back out of sight when we got close. We reached the top and saw a large party of Boers galloping round behind a hill on our right; they wheeled round and came straight over the hill, across the valley towards us, but were met by so heavy a fire that they were obliged to retire. By this time they had opened fire on us from all round, excepting only the point from which we had come. Poor Macgregor had gone with one of the companies of the 60th to show them where to post themselves, but, unluckily for him and the whole company with him, he took them too far below the brow and they got detached from the rest of our line, and being on the side of the hill the Boers could see them from the top of the one opposite. Only about sixteen men out of that company of seventy came back unhurt. Macgregor was shot, I believe, during the first half-hour. We had no sooner got possession of the hill all round than the firing became very hot all round. We all got off our horses, and they—poor brutes!—got killed right and left. The Artillery lost about twelve, and Mounted Infantry twenty-five. It was a wonder how Sir George's and mine and Major Essex's pony escaped; they were all together the whole time, and were, I think, the only group of which none were touched. The firing went on, sometimes more, sometimes less, from 12 o'clock to sunset; every now and then some poor fellow would be hit, and these were got together as much as possible. We made them as comfortable as we could before leaving them for the night, but they must have suffered fearfully from want of water and shelter during the night. When the sun went down the men were got together and formed up near the guns. About 9 o'clock we marched off in a hollow square, guns in the centre, and remainder of Mounted Infantry Rifles in skirmishing order all round. When we left the hill we all expected a real hard hand-to-hand fight before we should be able to cross the river, and if the Boers had occupied the drift I don't know how we should have been able to cross, with the water so high from the rain. And, as you will see in Sir G.'s letter to Mr. Childers, one of the Mounted Infantry had reported a large number were waiting for us, just before we

started. You ask me if Sir G. was in danger that day. He was, and more danger than I hope he will be in again. You see there was no keeping in reserve, and we were all pretty well in the same boat on the top of that hill; but he seemed to be quite confident he would not be touched. Once, I remember, I told him he certainly would be hit if he did not sit down; he said: 'Oh no, I shan't,' and seemed so certain about it that I began to think so too. The admirable conduct of the troops was, I think, almost entirely due to their perfect confidence in him, and to his coolness and self-possession throughout the day.

VII.

The Name Majuba.

Amajuba means 'pigeons,' or 'doves,' and Majuba is the colloquial pronunciation of the word. The Zulu lays stress on the penultimate syllable, and generally sounds the first and last very lightly. Probably numbers of wild pigeons lived in the rocks near the top of the hill, and thus gave rise to the name.

SKETCH MAP OF THE SCENE OF OPERATIONS IN NATAL.

Scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Miles.

Heights thus: 6280 in feet above the sea. Names of Farms thus: BATTLEFIELD.

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